

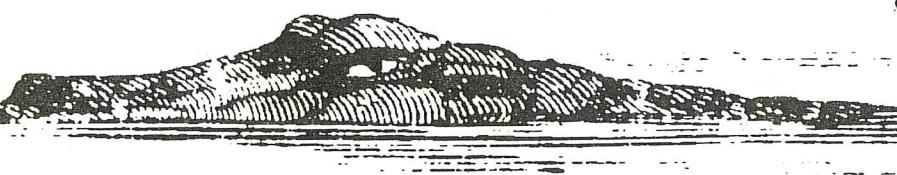
Masters of the Marsh-ial Arts
By Dudley Curry

The tide has fallen and the sun has risen,
A little buck fiddler wants what's his'n:
Some pluff-mud grits and a willing mate.
Little claw feeds at a rapid rate,
Big one waves a "Come here" motion
To a drab-brown maiden who grasps his notion.
Sideling into his watery pit,
Gonna make the fiddlers many and fit.

The great blue heron on long tip toes
Stalks the creek with its javelin nose.
Without a riffle, at slow motion rate,
Into position and then a wait -
Stab, snap, shake, gulp,
Another silver fishlet turns into pulp.

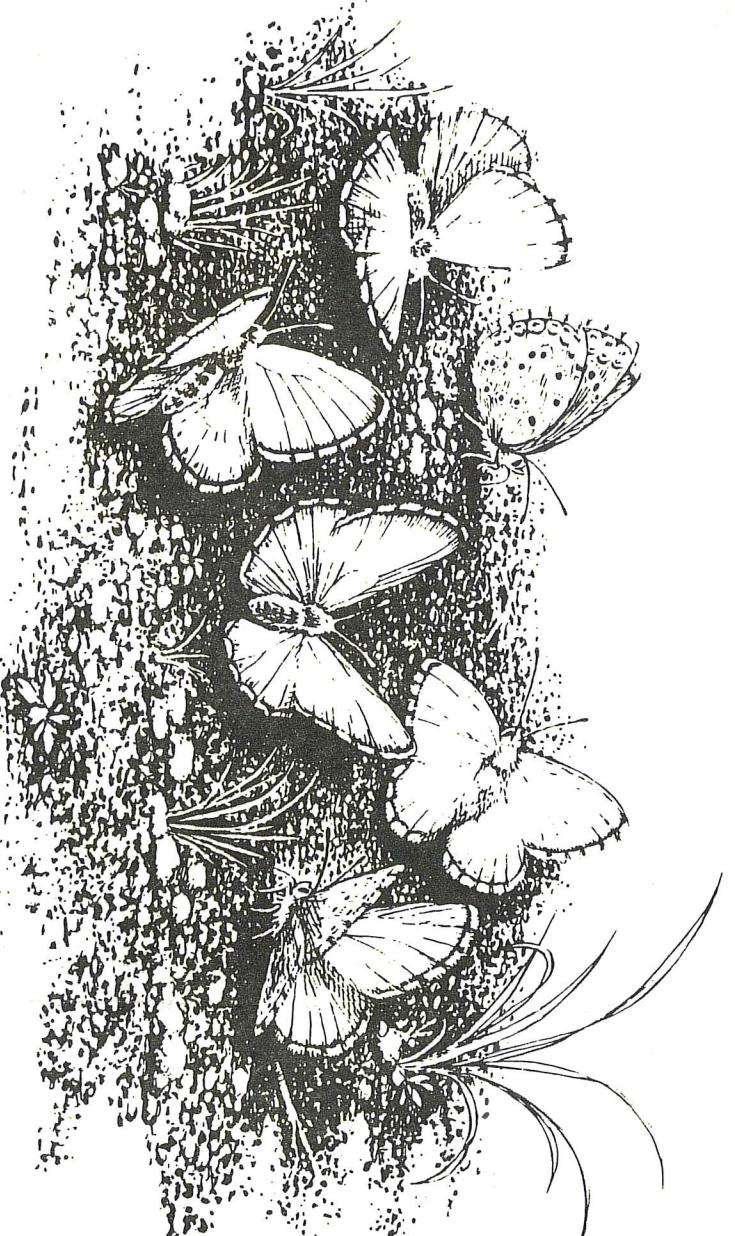
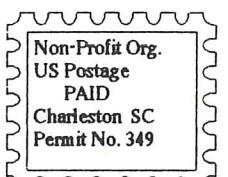
The planet twists the marsh into night
And masked racoons without daylight
Mine crab pits in marsh bank braille,
Startling awake the roosting rail.
Nimble fingers find combinations
To almost painless midnight rations.

A pair of knots on that low floating log
Appear to be equal in this morning fog.
And the log is staying right in place
Even against the current's race.
I must make this out, sooner or later;
If I move closer - my god, it's a _____



Charleston Natural History Society
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



THE LESSER SQUAWK

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHARLESTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
CHAPTER, NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

FROM THE HEART OF THE SWAMP
By Michael Dawson, Assistant Manager, Francis Beidler Forest

There is a man in Harleyville by the name of Lloyd Cone. I don't think Lloyd would mind if I referred to him as an "Old Timer", because I mean it in the most respectful of ways. You see, it is this fact that makes him such an expert at "old timey" things and an invaluable help to me in our efforts to interpret some of the historic uses of Four Holes Swamp. Lloyd has shown me how to make cypress shingles by hand, how to hew axe handles and mule hitches from hickory, how to make a watering trough from a cypress log, and how to make whistles from the cane that grows around the swamp. He even helped me "reconstruct" a prohibition-era whiskey still that we found in the swamp. Lloyd is not a drinker, so he relied on childhood memories for that one! Lloyd has told me stories of a lifetime of hunting, fishing and getting lost in Four Holes Swamp, tales of droughts and floods and fires, all laced with what amounts to a deep love for the swamp woods and a thankfulness that, at least in the Beidler Forest, the woods he remembers from childhood will always be the same.

One of the more intriguing "old timey" swamp endeavors Lloyd described to me was the practice of FISH STRIKING. Before you fisherman panic, rest assured that this is not some sort of unionized effort on the part of fish to refuse biting worms on hooks. Rather, Fish Striking was a method of catching mudfish in the shallow swamp flats. In this day of sleek fiberglass Bass boats with high power engines, electronic fish finders, two-way radios, carbon fishing rods, light refractive nylon line and rubberized worms, Fish Striking would stand out as the

MAMAS, DON'T LET YOUR BABIES GROW UP TO BE COWBIRDS

BACKYARD BIRDER
By Bruce Kruke



Two different new studies on declining bird populations are putting the blame on North American land development just as much as South American forest destruction. Our practice of breaking up deep woods leaves too much edge, making many species nest near enough for cowbirds to lay their eggs. Warblers, vireos, and thrushes prefer to nest in deep, deep woods, and cowbirds select nests closer to the forests' edge. When woods are broken up by development, pasturage, and small farms, all the nests are not very far from an edge. Cowbirds, knowing they won't have to care for their babies, just keep on laying, sometimes as much as three dozen eggs in a season. Also, our own feeders have increased the numbers of cowbirds and the increased growing for cereal crops has helped the cowbirds survive the winters--Cowbird populations have exploded.

Defensive behaviors on the part of songbirds are evolving slowly. Acadian flycatchers and Eastern phoebe stop incubating when the cowbird hatches before their own eggs, and start nesting again. Blue jays, robins, catbirds, and brown thrashers recognize cowbird eggs and dispose of them away from the nest. Orioles stab the egg to carry it away and waxwings break it and leave it in the nest. Yellow warblers build another nest on top of the one holding the cowbird egg. (One was found with six levels and eleven cowbirds in it!) Song sparrows and cardinals seem to be able to rear both their own and cowbirds, but little birds like warblers have babies that are just too tiny to compete with cowbird chicks that are seven times larger. Trapping and removing cowbirds is one method that has helped save the Kirkland's warbler. I hate to think that we're as much at fault as the rain forest destroyers, but it's something to think about.

It was exciting to see gray foxes coming to feed at the Jellison's out on White Point Road. They also had painted buntings drinking from the hummingbird feeder. You "listers" out there could start a new one--- species seen at the hummingbird feeder! Elga Boyer, who lives on Church Creek, John's Island, has had a pair of small parrot-like birds at her feeders for several weeks. They seemed most like Carolina parakeets, which we know are extinct. After much excited conjecture, Pete Laurie was called in and identified rosy-faced love birds --- escapees that behaved more like wild birds. Other reports include that by Scott Hall, who saw a catbird on Lamboll St. in early October, and a red-headed woodpecker at Lang Foster's feeder in late September.

The feeder watch program out of Cornell verifies what we thought: the Southeast suffered a higher proportion of declines in feeder activity from 1990-91 to 1991-92 than any other region. Cardinals, goldfinches, juncos, white-throats, downies,

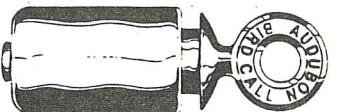
NOVEMBER

CNHS MEETING
MUSC Psych Auditorium
President Street
Park in "G" lot, Bee Street
November 10, 8:00 pm
SHIRLEY McGREAL: International Wildlife Trade

Dr. Shirley McGreal, founder of the International Primate Protection League, based at her primate center in Summerville, has received United Nations recognition for her efforts to protect endangered species. On Earth Day, at the Rio Earth Summit, Dr McGreal was awarded the prestigious United Nations' Global 500 Award.

CNHS is honored to receive Dr. McGreal's impassioned message on the International Wildlife Trade, given with emphasis on gorillas, orangutans, and chimpanzees.

Ed. Note: This will be a stem winder, folks.



CNHS FIELD TRIP
FRANCIS BEIDLER FOREST
Sunday, November 22, 1:30pm

The Beidler Forest is a National Audubon Sanctuary that preserves the earth's largest remaining original growth blackwater-bald cypress and tupelo-gum swamp forest.

HELP WANTED Work for Birdseed: November 14, 10am to 4pm, at Heath Farms Produce, Coleman Blvd., Mount Pleasant. We have received over 150 orders for birdseed this year and can use some help getting 40lb bags into cars. Give us an hour if you can.
REMEMBER TO PICK UP YOUR BIRDSEED ORDERS!

THE CHARLESTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
is a chapter of The National Audubon Society. Members of The NAS who live in the Trident area automatically become members of The Charleston Natural History Society. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, September through May, at 8:00pm, in the auditorium of The Psychiatric Institute on the campus of The Medical University of South Carolina. Field trips are held each month (except summer) and there are numerous special events.

MEMBERSHIP Membership dues for NEW MEMBERS is \$20. Members receive six bimonthly issues of National AUDUBON MAGAZINE and monthly issues (except summer) of THE LESSER SQUAWK, the CNHS newsletter. For information or a membership form, please call Herbert Macmurphy at 883-9252. To RENEW your yearly membership, please use the form mailed to you by National Audubon.

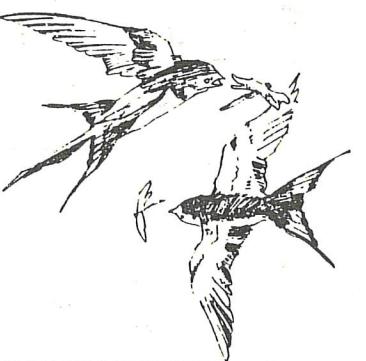
OFFICERS CNHS Office phone (577-7100); President, Herbert Macmurphy (883-9252); Vice President, Don Watts (797-6783); Secretary, Bobbin Huff (886-6911); Treasurer, Cindy Dickerson (884-0147)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Julian Harrison (795-1694), Sid Goff (274-8975), Mary Pringle (722-8050), Hal Currey (883-9114), Lori Duncan (795-4123), Jeremy James, Terrence Larimer (571-5936).

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN: MEMBERSHIP, Mary Ellen Sullivan (887-3561); CONSERVATION, Hayes Patterson (556-7430); PROGRAMS, Jake & Lori Duncan (795-4123); PUBLICITY, Bobbin Huff (886-6911); BIRD COUNTS, Steve Compton (577-4816); BIRD SEED, Rose Mitchell (723-7459); BIRD-A-THON, Jeremy James; RECYCLING, Cheryl Phillips (899-7635); NEWSLETTER EDITOR, Herbert Macmurphy (883-9252), Features Editor, Patricia Giddens (883-3937).

POST CARDS FROM THE EDGE-EFFECT

If you travel outside the Lowcountry, please do send a post card reporting unusual sightings. Mail to: CNHS Editor, 1820 I'on Ave., Sullivan's Island, SC 29482



ACE BASIN CHRISTMAS COUNT January 3, 1993

Participants should meet at Wood Brothers Store, Hwy 17S, seven miles south of Jacksonboro, 7 a.m. A social gathering is planned for the evening. For more information, call Pete Laurie at 762-5076(W), or 559-2046 (H).

EXPLORE THE COOPER RIVER WITH AMOCO

November 21, 7:30am, at Amoco Gate. Join Cheryl Phillips & Lee Lowder for tour of Amoco Corp.'s 6,000 undeveloped acres on upper Cooper River. Least Tern nesting grounds and abundant other wildlife.

Please call Cypress Gardens (553-0515) for information and reservations. Space limited.



CONSERVATION CORNER

By Hayes Patterson

DANIEL ISLAND--- On October 9th, Mac Macmurphy represented CNHS at a presentation of near complete development plans for Daniel Island by the Guggenheim Foundation. This meeting was another of a series the Foundation has had with interested parties since announcing their intention to develop the island. Reactions to the plan have been mixed; it exhibited many improvements over conventional developments but was not quite as revolutionary as we had anticipated. Regardless of how we ultimately feel about the results, the environmental community has been given ample opportunity to express our concerns. We hope that the Guggenheim Foundation will continue to demonstrate leadership in the development community by using Daniel Island to establish a new concept in planned growth.

LAKE MOULTRIE WATER AGENCY--- Last summer Santee Cooper announced plans to sell drinking water. The water will be drawn from lakes Moultrie and Marion, processed by a 24 million gallon-per-day water treatment plant to be built between Pinopolis and the Tail Race Canal and distributed through 23 miles of pipe using existing utility right of ways. Initial cost for the project is expected to be around 36 million dollars. In September, Berkeley County, the City of Goose Creek and the Towns of Summerville and Moncks Corner all passed resolutions and published notices that they had formed the Lake Moultrie Water Agency for the purpose of purchasing this water from Santee Cooper. This water will promote growth in these municipalities as well as rapid development in the portion of Berkeley County across the Cooper River which is now readily accessible via the Mark Clark Expressway. Unfortunately, Berkeley County has few controls in place to manage this growth. We would like to encourage residents of this area to develop a community plan which will preserve the resources of the area and manage this growth. Planning comparable to that on adjacent Daniel Island would be difficult to achieve without a single owner but perhaps some of those concepts can be utilized to improve on the normal succession of suburban sprawl in unincorporated areas. The big question will be just how much growth the Lowcountry can tolerate before we become a coastal megalopolis.

COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS--- Those of you who were able to attend the October field trip to the Sullivan's Island dune field lead by Dr. Richard Porcher realize the value of these coastal ecosystems. A number of such areas were heavily "pruned" by oceanfront homeowners after Hurricane Hugo to improve their view of the ocean. This work was accomplished without the required permits and some homeowners were subsequently required to make amends for their destruction. During the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, the same thing happened around Biscayne Bay, Florida. Waterfront property owners illegally cleared mangrove thickets to

enhance their view of the bay. There is currently a movement among some Sullivan's Islanders to modify the nature of this area in a way that will coincidentally open up their view of the ocean. It seems incongruous that people would spend fortunes to live on the beach and not have a more insightful appreciation of it.



BIRDER

towhees, brown thrashers, pine siskins, purple finches, white-breasted nuthatches and even starlings were down, with purple finches showing the greatest decline. Cornell predicts a virtual invasion of pine siskins this winter! They, too, feel that there's more than just the mild northern winter keeping the birds from coming south.

To prepare you for identification of these species when they descend upon us, here are some things to look for to distinguish siskins from goldfinches and purple finches from house finches. Siskins are stripy and brown with little bits of yellow showing on the ends of the wings—not a suitable scientific description, but then this is for the backyard birder. The goldfinch is an olive green in the winter with the males being brighter than the females. The purple finch is more wine or raspberry red in color than the house finch which is more clear, orangey or tomato red. The purple finch has a chunkier head and a stockier bill than the house finch. Purples have a notched tail and houses have a squarish tail. As you can see, the males are fairly easy to identify, but there is a lot of confusion with the immatures and females, which are all stripy and sparrow-like. The heads of the purple finch females have a distinct pattern with white stripes behind the eye and down the jaw line, making a triangular brown cheek patch, whereas the house finches' heads are very finely striped and look more gray-brown and even all over. House finches have a brown stripe over the eye and a lot of stripes on the flanks and lower belly. The purple finch has fewer stripes on its white lower belly and the stripes are a redder brown. Hope this helps a little—hope we have some comparisons to make!

Trivia: An American robin eats about fourteen feet of earthworms a day.

Bruce W. Kruke, 7352 Toogoodoo Rd., Younges Island, SC 29449; Phone: 889-6191



SWAMP

epitome of Low Tech. To be a fully equipped Fish Striker, one needed only wooden torches, a burlap bag, and a bent wagon wheel rim!

The wooden torches were just stakes split out of the pitch-saturated heartwood of an old pine tree. Sometimes called "lightwood", these stakes could easily be lit and would burn brightly on their own. The burlap bag was called a "croaker sack" and was usually just an old feed or flour bag. The wagon wheel rim was straightened out and cut to about a 4-5 foot length. On one end about 6 inches of iron was doubled back upon itself to create a thick "handle". Six inches from the other end, the iron was heated and a bend was made parallel to the wide side of the wheel rim. This was the 'striker'. To picture what I mean, imagine a very crude golf club made from a bent wagon wheel rim.

Fish Striking required that one wade through the swamp shallows at nighttime. The croaker sack was hung over one shoulder, the lightwood stakes were bundled and slung over the other. In one hand, a lit torch was held high and in the other, the striker was held by the handle and rested on the shoulder. When a mudfish was attracted by the light, it could be seen at the surface. At that moment, the striker was swung swiftly down into the surface of the water with a chopping motion. Clubbed fish would float to the surface where they could easily be gathered and placed in the sack. Lloyd tells me that an experienced Fish Striker would have no trouble filling a sack in one evening! That sounds like a fish story to me! Lloyd made a striker for me to use in a display here; I may just have to pull it off the wall and go give it a try some night!

I have worked at the Beidler Forest for twelve years now, and have wonderful memories of my time here, but I marvel at Lloyd's long term love affair with the swamp. He remembers when much more of the swamp was in a virgin condition, back before Beidler Forest became the last chunk of it. I hope you will consider visiting the Forest yourself and see just what it is that excites Lloyd so much.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to write: Mike Dawson, The Swamp Genius, Francis Beidler Forest, 336 Sanctuary Road, Harleyville, SC 29448, or call 1-462-2150, or visit the Forest, 9-5, Tuesdays thru Sundays.