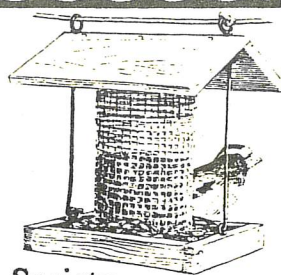


## HARD LUCK

Stop! Look in the grass right there.  
LONG HAIR OF THE HOOVED ONES WEAVES THE BEST.  
I'm looking.. I'm looking. Where?  
LICHEN GIVES THE SOFTEST BOTTOM TO THE NEST.  
See how they have spread the grass.  
SOON THE FLIGHT-MATE IS DUE AGAIN.  
You mean that little brownish mass?  
I FEEL ANOTHER EGG BEGIN A STRAIN.  
Yes, that's a sparrow on its nest.  
IT HAS SLIPPED RIGHT OUT BESIDE THE OTHER.  
I see the back but not the rest.  
THERE IS ROOM YET FOR ANOTHER.  
Look for a dark or light eye streak.  
MY MATE LANDED IN THAT SHRUBBERY.  
Is that some yellow on the beak?  
WHY DOESN'T HE COME STRAIGHT TO ME?  
Look, another's landed on that shrub.  
A BLACK AND YELLOW THING IS DRAWING NEAR!  
It's making such a big hub-bub.  
IT DEFINITELY IS SLITHERING HERE.  
I think it has a darkish crown.  
IT'S DOUBLE TONGUE HAS SMELLED THE EGGS.  
It won't sit still— all I see is brown.  
IT WILL LEAVE US NOTHING — NOT EVEN DREGS.  
It's swooping down into the grass.  
THE MATE HAS MADE A PASS AT IT!  
I saw a white tail feather on that pass.  
THE THING WON'T STOP EVEN WHEN IT'S HIT.  
Now the nesting one is fluttering around.  
IT UNLOCKS THE JAW, AND WE MUST LEAVE OR DIE!  
Does a Chipping Sparrow nest on the ground?  
GIVE UP, BRAVE MATE, WE HAVE TO FLY!  
No, but I'm sure field sparrows do.  
LOOK SHARP NOW FOR A BETTER SITE.  
A Chipping Sparrow on the list would be a coup.  
WE WIN BY CAMOUFLAGE AND FLIGHT!  
There they go. Damn, out of sight!

DUDLEY CURRY 10/1/93



Charleston Natural History Society  
P.O. Box 504  
Charleston, SC 29402

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## REMINDER: BIRDSEED PICK-UP DAY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 10 AM  
TO 4 PM

EVERYONE WHO ORDERED  
BIRDSEED IS REMINDED OF THE  
ONE-DAY-ONLY PICK-UP TO BE HELD  
AT HEATH FARMS VEGETABLE  
STORE ON COLEMAN BOULEVARD,  
MOUNT PLEASANT. FOR THOSE OF  
YOU WHO NEGLECTED TO ORDER  
ON TIME, WE WILL HAVE A LIMITED  
AMOUNT OF ADDITIONAL SEED ON  
HAND FOR SALE.

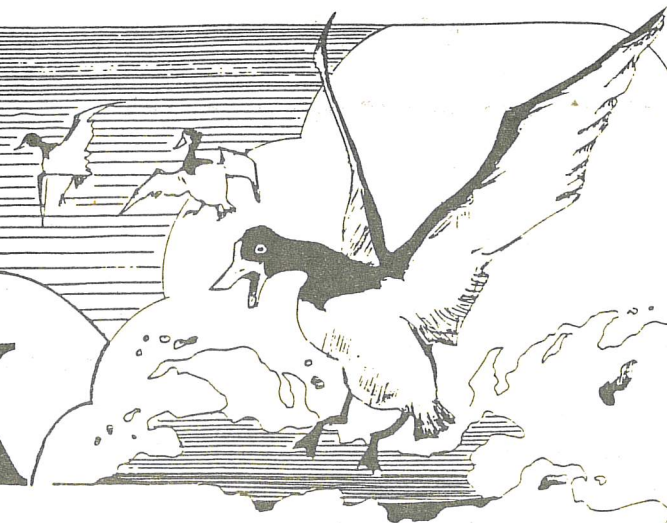


C.N.H.S GREATLY APPRECIATES THE  
EQUIPMENT AND SPACE DONATED BY  
HEATH FARMS AND ROYALL HARDWARE  
FOR OUR ANNUAL BIRDSEED SALE. PLEASE  
PATRONIZE THESE FRIENDS OF THE  
SOCIETY

HIGH QUALITY "BIRD MAN" FEEDERS  
AND HOUSES FOR ALL CAVITY NESTING  
SPECIES WILL BE AVAILABLE AGAIN  
THIS YEAR AT THE BIRDSEED SALE.  
THESE ARE BUILT LOCALLY BY ONE OF  
OUR MEMBERS AND ARE BEING SOLD AT  
DISCOUNT PRICES, WITH 15% OF  
PROCEEDS GOING TO C.N.H.S. WHAT A  
GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT!!

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Charleston SC  
Permit No. 349

# THE LESSER SQUAWK



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

## FROM THE HEART OF THE SWAMP

By MICHAEL DAWSON, Asst Sanctuary Mngr  
FRANCIS BEIDLER FOREST

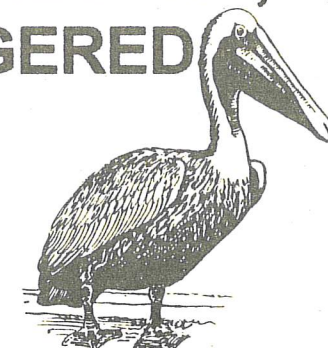
Perhaps you have heard of the antiquated practice of using caged canaries in coal mines. Canaries have a fragile metabolism that is highly sensitive to detrimental conditions; if exposed to toxic gases, they would die long before the level became lethal to humans. In effect, the birds were "early warning devices"! When the canary keeled over, it was time to clear out of the tunnel... pronto!!

What's my point? Have you noticed it yet? Fewer birds, fewer songs, fewer species... what's going on? Where are all the birds?

Recently, I completed compiling the data from our annual Breeding Bird Census. This census determines the numbers and species of birds nesting on the sanctuary. Since 1979, we have consistently had the highest densities per acre for East coast forested habitats, and fourth highest in the country. Talk about a testimony to the value of virgin swamp forest! While this years results were exciting, they were at the same time rather discouraging.

The post-Hugo swamp forest continues to be a haven for birds that eat the insects found in dead trees. For example, we have seen an increase in wood-peckers

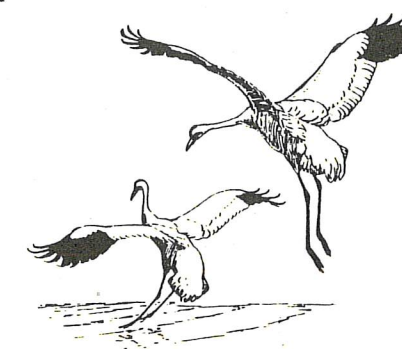
## ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, WELL, ENDANGERED



The Endangered Species Act is under attack by opponents who seek to weaken the protections it provides. How can you help? By letting your elected officials know you are concerned. The Audubon Society endorses the Studds Bill (HR.2043), The Endangered Species Act of 1993, of which Congressman Arthur Ravenel is a co-sponsor. So far we do not know how senators Thurmond and Hollings will vote. Call them today or send a post card and urge them to support Senate Bill S.921, The ESA Amendments of 1993. You can reach them by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121, or write to: Senator \_\_\_\_\_

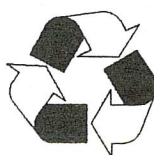
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Also urge them to help preserve our wetlands by supporting the following bills: S.1195 and S.1304. These are important parts of The Clean Water Act that pertain to Section 404 for the designation and protection of our wetlands.



NOVEMBER 1993

Please see SWAMP, page two



# NOVEMBER

## CNHS 2ND TUESDAY MUSC Psych. Auditorium President Street Park in "G" Lot, Bee Street Tuesday, November 9, 8:00 PM

Jim Elliot and Linda Flanagan of the Charleston Raptor Center will describe how the center functions and rehabilitates injured raptors. They will outline their goals for the future and explain their volunteer program. On stage will be a few of the hawks under their care. This is a great chance for a close look at some really cool birds.

## Edisto River Canoe Trip Saturday, Nov. 6, 9:00 AM

See the river in its fall colors. Trip departs from Colleton State Park, 10 miles south of St. George on Hgwy 15, near intersection with Hgwy 61. All equipment is provided. \$15 per person. Led by the Edisto River Canoe & Kayak Commission.

## Explore the Francis Marion Forest Sunday, Nov. 14, 8:00 AM

Join David Huff on an outing to the Gaillard Lake area of the forest. Wildflowers and migratory warblers should abound. Meet David at the Texaco Station, Hgwy 17N & Hgwy 41.

## Night Walk at the Francis Beidler Forest Saturday, Nov. 20, 5:00 PM

Come listen to the sounds of a swamp at night. 'Nuff said.  
Call Mike Dawson (462-2150) to sign up.

## After hours at Old Santee Canal State Park Saturday Nov. 20, 4:30 PM

Canoe and hike in the park as evening sets and the crowds leave. You may join a guided run down the canoe trail or hike the boardwalk. Bring a light supper to enjoy on the canoe docks. Call the Park at 899-5200 to register and avoid the entrance fee. This is a special opportunity to use this great park.

## HEART OF THE SWAMP

and nuthatches nesting on the census plot. Cavity nesters like Carolina wrens are also doing very well as dead trees hollow out and provide homesites. Most of our regular nesters are doing quite well, with little variation from year to year.

On the down side, several species are in trouble here. Summer tanagers, hooded warblers, and my personal favorite, the wood thrush, are in decline. The best example we have of a "bird on the brink", so to speak, is the northern parula warbler. To most people it is yet another one of those difficult to identify "little guys", of which there seem to be so many. Upon closer examination you find a beautiful blue-grey bird with a bright yellow neck and belly, and a peculiar double stripe of orange and black underneath his chin. They make

wonderful little "fairy tale" nests in the middle of Spanish moss clumps. Their song is a bright rising trill with a chip at the end, and very difficult to imitate. When we initiated our Breeding Bird Census in 1979, the parula warbler was the MOST common species with 1.5 nests per acre. Over the years we have seen a steady decline until this year, when absolutely NO territories were identified on the plot. I heard them singing occasionally, but they did not nest here. Fourteen years and then... POOF!

Birds that nest in North America and winter in Central and South America (known as Neo-Tropical Migrants) are the most affected. The combination of rainforest clearing in their wintering areas of Central/South America and the fragmentation of large forest blocks in their breeding range here is more than they can tolerate. It is all well and good to provide a spectacular nesting site like the Beidler Forest, but if the bird crosses state and national lines, passing through and to degraded habitats, it will be for naught.

I have gone a long way to say that some alarming trends seem to be happening with our country's bird populations. My concern, and I hope yours, goes beyond the pure aesthetics of having beautiful birds to watch and wonderful songs to hear. Birds, on the whole, are superb indicator species. If an area is degraded environmentally, one of the first groups to be affected will be the birds. And when the birds begin to disappear on a global scale, like the canary in the coal mine, we should take notice... before it is too late!

If you have any questions, please write Michael Dawson, The Bird Loving Swamp Genius, Francis Beidler Forest, 336 Sanctuary Road, Harleyville, SC 29448, or call 462-2150, or visit 9 - 5, Tues. thru Sun.

## NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS

By NATHAN DIAS

19 Sept	1 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Patriot's Pt	D. Forsythe
25 Sept	2 Black-capped Petrels	Offshore	N. Dias, C.& S. Watson, et al.
	150+ Cory's Shearwaters	"	"
	38 Audubon's Shearwaters	"	"
	2 Greater Shearwaters	"	"
	1 White-faced Storm Petrel	"	"
	16 Red-necked Phalaropes	"	"
	1 Red Phalarope	"	"
	5 Pomarine Jaegers	"	"
	2 Parasitic Jaegers	"	"
	1,000s Common Terns	"	"
	500+ Black Terns	"	"
	2 Sooty Terns	"	"
	5 Bridled Terns	"	"

	1 Golden-winged Warbler	Patriot's Pt	D. Forsythe
26 Sept	5 Long-billed Curlews	Keys Inlet	J. Cox
30 Sept	1 Western Kingbird	Patriot's Pt	D. Forsythe
5 Oct	1 Gray Kingbird	Moore's Lnding	D. Forsythe, et al.
6 Oct	1 Black Rail *	Sullivan's Isl.	H. Macmurphy
9 Oct	1 Broad-winged Hawk	Wappoo Road	N. Dias

\* Apparent window kill at house on The Cove, Sullivan's Island.

Send reports of unusual birds or animals to: Nathan Dias, 1642 McClain St., Charleston, SC 29407. Phone 556-4792

## BACKYARD BIRDER

By BRUCE KRUCKE

The male hummingbirds and painted buntings seemed to have all left before October 1st, but I still have females of both species as of this writing on October 14th. The hummer is so fat she has to sit to feed - her tail and feet look like little pins sticking out of a cushion. Ruby throats normally eat about 5 times their body weight a day and up to 14 times their weight when getting ready for migration. I guess we'd look funny, too if we gained fifty percent of our body weight in a month!

Van Atkins went birding October 8th with Charlie Walters and Ben Smith. One of their most productive spots was Patriot's Point where they saw 4 merlin, 2 Cooper's hawks, 6 kestrel, 35 flickers, 2 big kettles of 22 and 30 thermaling turkey vultures, red starts, catbirds, palm, prairie, and yellow warblers, hermit thrush and a red fox. In the course of his workday, Van also stops to bird, and recently he saw 14 bluebirds at Brickyard Plantation, and from the Mark Clark Expressway, 200 plus American avocet in a shallow pond on Clowder Island (the western part of Daniel Island). He saw them on the 8th and the 11th of October, and Cheryl Baskins Phillips and I also saw them on the 12th. That was very exciting since avocet was a life bird for me and a state bird for Cheryl. There were also some interesting large russet ducks with them, but the flexing of the bridge and the wind as the trucks passed was so nerve-racking that we couldn't stay to identify them.

A new study has been done on domestic cats and the havoc they can

wreak on small wildlife. The study was done in Wisconsin and determined that cats there were killing nineteen million songbirds and one hundred and forty thousand game birds annually!! Another study in England came up with similar figures. This doesn't include squirrels (yea, cats!), rabbits, moles, mice, rats, lizards, etc. The study showed that well fed cats, declawed cats, and cats with bells all did just fine as predators: it's an immutable fact that cats are hunters. The impact of felines on wildlife here in the U.S. widens with the spread of suburban development. Cats can live entirely in the house and, eventually, it may come to that.

I recently read an observation by Paul Harris of Hixon, Tennessee, about the fact that birds are about the only order of life that is "all right". Starting at the bottom, there are protozoa and the like, that are poisonous to our intestines. Then invertebrates like pinworms, hookworms, and stinging jellyfish get us. Don't forget sharks, barracuda, moray eels and piranha, to say nothing of insects such as scorpions, chiggers, ticks, fleas, lice, fire ants, wasps, bees, etc. Even reptiles - there are venomous snakes, poisonous lizards and frogs, and unfriendly crocs and alligators. Mammals also have their specialties in the danger department towards humans - first being other humans. Skunks and porcupines, wolverines, grizzlies, enraged bulls and hungry cats of all types are all things we'd not care to be cornered by. But are their any birds you really have to fear? Their feathers do not sting or barb and they don't use their talons or beaks on humans except in self-defense. Maybe the fact that they can fly away keeps them from being aggressive towards humans. That's not to say that they can't be a nuisance, e.g. huge icarid flocks, or woodpeckers on a metal chimney (or thousands of swifts dead IN your chimney!), but think how it would be if we always had to worry about being bitten or stung by birds. Instead, with their soft colorful plumage, their often beautiful vocalizations, and their interesting behavior, the world's birds are, with very rare exceptions, a reassuring presence in the lives of humans.

You can tell when I get this philosophical that there haven't been many reports of feeder activity! But I do have a recipe for you to try. Cornbread for Birds (or whomever!): Mix 3 pints of yellow cornmeal, 3 teaspoons baking powder, 2/3 cup shortening, and 3 pints of water together and bake in a deep pan at 425 degrees for 25 minutes. Serve to the birds on a platform feeder or a basket. Or, just toss out your leftovers - this is another example of my point that all bird feeding books are written for residents of the Northeast.

Let me hear from you. Bruce Krucke, 7352 Toogoodoo Rd., Yorges Island, SC 29449. Phone 889-6191.

## THE CHARLESTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY, FOUNDED 1905,

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, Don Watts(797-6783), Vice-President, Hal Currey(883-9114), Secretary, Jan Snook(849-9485), Treasurer, Herbert Macmurphy(883-9252).

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** Ed Blitch, Nathan Dias, Jose Escobar, Patricia Giddens, Sid Goff, Polly Holden, David Huff, Jeremy James, Jane Lareau, Terrence Larimer, Lee Lowder, Rose Mitchell, Hayes Patterson, Ann Shahid.

**COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:** MEMBERSHIP, Patricia Giddens (883-3937); CONSERVATION, Jane Lareau (795-2150); PROGRAMS, Lee Lowder (723-3057); BIRD COUNTS, Ed Blitch (795-5277); BIRD SEED, Rose Mitchell (723-7459), Patricia Giddens (883-3937); BIRD-A-THON, Jeremy James (886-5254); NEWSLETTER EDITOR, Herbert Macmurphy(883-9252).