

Heart Of The Swamp

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There is a sub-group of the Herpetologically Ignorant known as CYLINDRICAL BIGOTS. These are people who absolutely despise all tubular life forms. It is not so much a fear as a hatred. They're the people who tell me stories of shooting snakes deep in the woods,,, or swerving their car to flatten a snake on the road, of beating a snake with a log, a hoe, a rake or some other creative implement of destruction. I am not saying that a poisonous snake in your yard doesn't need to be dealt with, but going out of your way to kill them is so unnecessary. Just learn about snakes and your hatred may turn to interest! Some examples: Of the 37 species of snakes inhabiting the coastal plain, only 6 are poisonous! More people die each year of bee stings than snake bites! Snakes are important for keeping rodent populations in check and in turn are food for birds of prey. Take your pick, snakes or rats!

This is a great time of year to visit the Beidler Forest, but not a great time of year to see our wonderful snakes. The temperatures are cooling, the leaves are changing and fall migratory birds are arriving. Please come see us soon. We would be happy to start you on the road to SNAKE ENLIGHTENMENT using one of our gentle pets, at your request only!

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

PRC

From Page 1

minds now and decided that development in the parks -- waterslides, golf courses and other amusements -- are a better use for the money than what they promised.

They spent around \$8 million on land, and say they have finished buying parkland. There is \$9 million remaining in the acquisition fund. Plans now are to take over all of Charleston County's

boat landings and spend money sprucing them up. You may be charged a fee eventually for use of the landings. Instead of getting new access, you will be getting the same old access and charged a fee for it. PRC has no idea how much money the boat landings will cost, but has budgeted the remaining acquisition money on it nonetheless.

Please contact your County Council representative, or your member of the Legislative Delegation if you believe PRC should spend 52% of the bond money on purchasing land as they told us they would. PRC's brochure advertised: "We are planning for your future. We are also planning for the future of your children and grandchildren. We must preserve land now for generations of families just like yours." It is doubtful that voters would have given PRC \$34 million if it had advertised instead, "We intend to spend the bulk of the bond money, not on purchasing land for future generations, but on water slides and golf courses."

Former CNHS President Runs for Office

Former CNHS President, Morgan McClure, will run for commissioner of the Charleston Soil and Water Conservation District in the upcoming November general election. This often uncontested elected position, is a non-partisan, non-paid position with the Conservation District, which is a governmental subunit of the State's Land Resource Division of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Although there is often little known about the Conservation District, its actions are frequently seen by county residents to include the Adopt A Dune Program on Sullivan's Island and Folly Beach, shoreline protection at Drayton Hall, the many outdoor learning centers at area schools as well as many other technical assistance services provided to the county in the areas of conservation resource management and environmental education.

Morgan, after leaving the CNHS Executive Board to pursue a second graduate masters degree at Clemson University came back to Charleston and

has remained active in the conservation arena. Currently he is active on a number of committees and task forces of the Charleston Harbor Project, The Coastal Pesticide Advisory Committee, Conservation League's Land Use Advisory Committee, Clemson Extension's County Advisory Committee, the Conservation Committee of the North American Benthological Society, and just stepped down as being the Chair of the Society of Wetland Scientist South Atlantic Chapter which covered the East Coast from Maryland to Florida and the Caribbean.

With little known about the Conservation Districts in each county, Morgan urges CNHS members to call not only the Charleston District for which he is running for, but Dorchester and Berkeley which will also have candidates for election to find out more about who is running and what Conservation Districts do. In the Charleston election the voters will select two of three candidates. These are Morgan McClure, and the two incumbents William Kennerty and Billy Geraty. Even though this is a nonpartisan election, CNHS feel it's new worthy to comment on the former CNHS President. This does not serve as an endorsement to any one candidate, but CNHS encourages its members to learn more about each of the candidates so that one may exercise their democratic rights responsibly.

OBSERVATIONS By DON WATTS

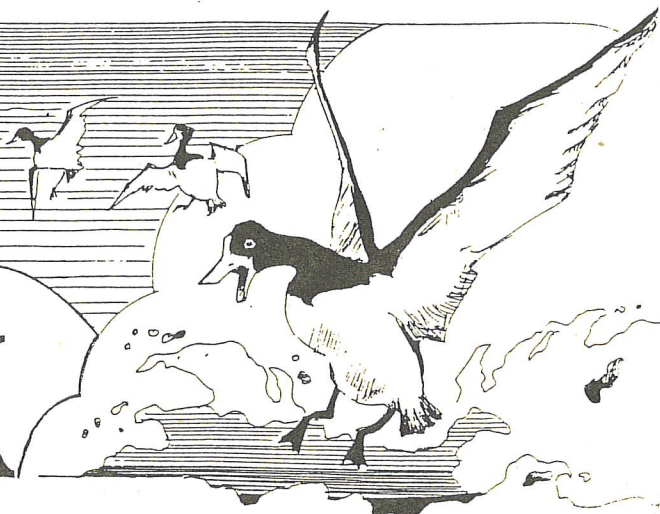
Judy Edwards of the Fort Lamar area, James Island, reported Woodstorks on Seaside Creek, August 18th.

Charlie Walters reports Nashville Warblers, and many other species of warblers, at Patriot's Point, August 20th.

Record your observations or questions with Don Watts at 797-6783, or on the chapter-voice mail at 577-7100, or E mail on internet to DONWATTS@AOL.COM

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THE LESSER SQUAWK



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

POPULAR PATRIOT'S POINT BIRDING SITE UNDER DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

As you read this, plans are being made for the development of Patriot's Point. While we have no details yet, it is safe to say that the development will be extensive. Patriot's Point has the potential to be a remarkably beautiful development if done right.

Audubon members know and love the winding road to the Patriot's Point Golf Course. It is one of the greatest birding spots in Charleston. Ornithologist Will Post tells us it is a critical location for migrating birds to rest and fatten up before the next long leg of their journey. The micro-geography of Patriot's Point is very similar to another famous birding spot-- Cape May, New Jersey. In both cases, thousands of warblers, tanagers, vireos, thrushes and other birds funnel down the coast and congregate at these spots that lie between the mouth of the river and harbor.

It is important to write letters to our elected officials and other people who will be responsible for developing Patriot's Point. We must let them know that the dense trees and shrubs bordering the main roadway are critical habitat and must be preserved. It is possible for full-scale development to happen in conjunction with a beautifully preserved buffer.

As we are all aware, neo-tropical migrants are in trouble. Their habitat is being destroyed both in South and Central America, where they overwinter, and here in the United States, where they nest. Staging and resting areas during migration are critical for them to survive the perilous journey twice a year. Undeveloped natural area along the coast are increasingly rare and must be protected.

While we have the altruistic motive of wanting to protect habitat for birds, it doesn't hurt to dwell on the positive economic impact of the "birding industry" Birders could be one of many tourist types, conventioners, gamblers (or whatever) who come to visit Patriot's Point. For example, the 100,000 birders who visit Cape May each year spend in excess of \$10 million dollars. We're starting to talk about real money there. Active birders spend between \$1,850 and \$2,700 on birding each year, and they spend the most on travel. Counting the birdseed, binoculars, and bird books we buy, and the trips we take to see birds, experts have calculated that birding is a \$20 billion industry per year in North America.

Because there are so many of us (estimates range from 6 million to 60 million birders), our economic potential (a lot of us are wealthy) and our educational background (we are all very bright), we are said to have "the potential to be one of the strongest forces in North American conservation."

Let's meet that potential. Write one letter on behalf of the birds and address it to: Admiral James T. Flatley, Chairman
Patriot's Point Commission
40 Patriot's Point Road
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Then send copies to:

Senator Lawrence E. Richter Representative Harry M. Hallman
640 Pitt Street & 1275 Vagabond Lane
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464 Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Tell them that you understand Patriot's Point will be developed but you want it to be done in a way that accommodates both humans and birds. Surely there's room for us both.

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS ON CHARLESTON COUNTY PRC

The Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission has decided to remove a proposed golf course from the master plan for the new North Area park. The Commission, to their credit, responded positively when the Charleston Natural History Society, S.C. Coastal Conservation League, Sierra Club and others spoke against the golf course at a public hearing. The point was made that golf courses are not bad, but that Charleston County residents don't want their parks to be golf courses.

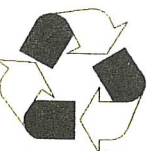
That's the good news. The bad news is that the Commission states firmly there will be a golf course in one of their parks eventually. It might be the new John's Island land they purchased, or the Edisto Park, or Palmetto Islands. They haven't decided yet, and presumably they'll let us know when they do.

More bad news is that PRC has budgeted 75% of the \$34 million bond money for park development and only 25% on land acquisition. In their published brochure advertising the bond referendum in 1992, PRC pledged to spend 52% of the bond money on land acquisition (\$17 million!), saying it was "critical to protect land now while it is available and affordable." They've changed their

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



OCTOBER 1994

CNHS OCTOBER MEETING
Sullivan's Island Fire Station
Saturday, October 22, 10-12 AM
Workshop On Bird Identification

Probably most birders can remember the first bird they truly identified using a field guide and old binoculars. After that excitement comes a long period of uncertain sightings until gradually the learner becomes the experienced birder. It says a lot about birding that so many beginners persevere, on their own, through this painstaking, often confusing initiation. Of course, anyone can dramatically improve their learning curve by taking the instruction of accomplished teachers.

To that end CNHS offers a workshop that should help you nail down for once and for all those basic points of bird identification you'll use for a lifetime. Jan Snook, CNHS Board member and noted local birder, describes why the shape of bill, legs, wings, tail, feet, leads to a reasoned understanding of the bird you see. On hand will be many preserved "skins" that offer close-up inspection of feathers and color.

This class is for about 20 novice to intermediate birders above the age of 10 years. Please call Jan at 849-9485 to register. There is a \$2 charge for materials.

The Sullivan's Island Fire Station is on Middle Street, two blocks to the right of the Hwy 703 Causeway. Bring a lunch, there is park just next door. After lunch, those who wish may do some island birding with Jan.

CNHS FIELD TRIP

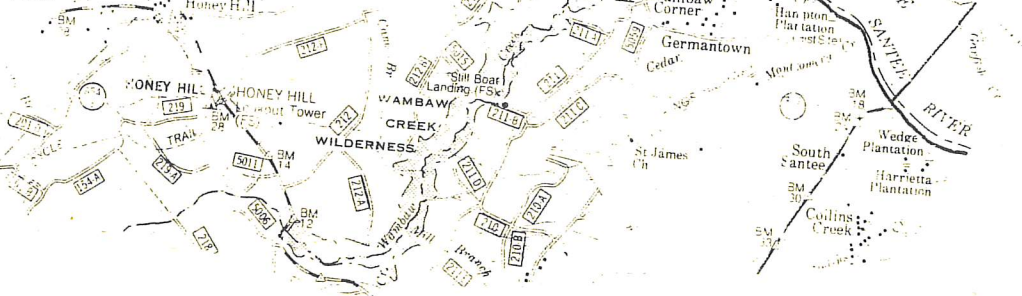
Canoe and Camp in the Francis Marion National Forest
Saturday, Sunday, October 29 & 30

Well, Campers, it's an axiom of birding that the more time you spend in the field, the better chance you have to see the birds. Follow me so far? To review, to see those fancy birds you can never find, go to a place where the birds like to go --- and stay there awhile. Here's how.

David Huff will lead a camping and canoeing trip into the Wambaw district of the Francis Marion Forest. Elmwood Campground is deep in a hardwood section of The Marion and features pump water & port-o-lets. The area abounds with wildlife. Canoeing will be along fabled Wambaw Creek, with half day floats planned. It may be possible to arrange for canoeing only.

Call David at 886-6911 about a week in advance to arrange for canoes if you don't have your own. He plans to form a convoy at Gregories Texaco Station, Hwy 17 North & Hwy 41, at 8:00 AM, Saturday, October 29.

You should plan to be essentially self-contained, with your own tent, gear and food. There will be Turkey and deer hunters in the area, so bring an International Orange outer vest.



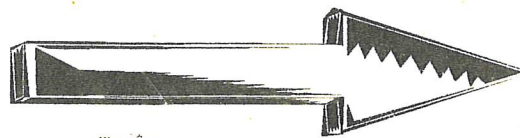
COLUMBIA AUDUBON SOCIETY COMPLETES SOD FARM CHECKLIST

The birding world is all a titter with the news that the Columbia Audubon Society has published a bird checklist for the unique birding site at Super-Sod Farms, Orangeburg, S.C. Though 100 miles inland, the sod farms have proved to be attractive to certain quite rare shorebirds, among many others.

CAS is interested in expanding the list by adding previously undocumented or new sightings. You can assist the efforts of CAS members by sending in your reports. To obtain copies of the list, send your request with a stamped, self-addressed envelope (4 1/4 X 9 1/2") to:

Columbia Audubon Society
P.O. Box 5923
Columbia, SC 29250

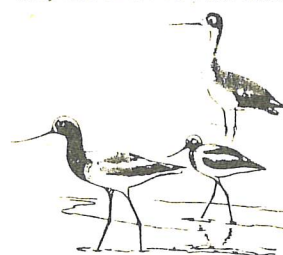
OCTOBER IS BIRD SEED SALES MONTH. THE DEADLINE FOR ORDERING IS NOVEMBER 1. SEE THE SEED ORDER FORM IN THIS MONTH'S LESSER SQUAWK



BACKYARD BIRDER
By BRUCE KRUCKE

Early September brought species number 155 for our yard list. Philacus, a vireo at the bird bath. I got very good views with and without binoculars and discussed it with Dennis Forsythe to confirm my identification. Also new for the fall at the feeders were a redstart and a summer tanager. Otherwise the birds at the feeder have been almost all scruffy looking molting immatures. The wrens, painted buntings, parulas, and cardinals look the worst.

In late August Van Atkins reported 600 plus avocet at Clouter Island, along with Hudsonian and marbled godwits and gull-billed terns. They figure last year that about 350 of the avocet wintered over here, so if you've never seen one, this could be your chance. Van also reported a totally albino barn



swallow on Hoshee Rd. Even the bill was white.

As you're adding fall plantings to your backyard habitat, consider these butterfly attracting plants: Buddleia butterfly bushes, aurelia, shrub lantana, button bush, sweet pepperbush, the big wild mints, any of the daisy style composites, herbs (especially hysop, sages, and catnip), and flowers in a variety of

colors. To encourage butterflies to stay for their whole life cycle add red clover, alfalfa, parsley, dill, lovage, fennel, and milkweed. Try not to use chemicals and pesticides in these areas.

To attract birds, plant shrubs with berries that ripen at different times: blueberries and blackberries for early summer and viburnums and hollies for the winter months. Autumn olive is another with long lasting fruit. How about "planting" a dead tree for woodpeckers. Either girdle a tree you don't mind losing or stand a large snag or dead trunk up. Owls might enjoy roosting there too. The sparrows and other ground feeders will enjoy all the butterfly plants as they go to seed.

How about making your bird bath more interesting? Moving water is the way to do that. Add a drip, a spray, or a recirculating pump and a few rocks for the water to run over from one bird bath to another. Just the sound of the running water will bring in many different birds.

As you know, cattle egrets came here from the African continent, with a start in Brazil. They originally followed grazing animals such as zebras, wildebeests, and waterbucks. A recent study determined that they almost never foraged with giraffes, gazelles, or impalas. They prefer animals that move at five to fifteen steps per minute. The favorite is the Cape buffalo. Cattle egrets are a favorite food of eagles in Florida, where the eagles often cooperate in capturing an egret by having one herd it toward the other.

In southern Veracruz, large neotropical green frogs have been documented eating hooded warblers. Avenging a great blue heron, no doubt.

Feel like doing some good works? How about helping a nursing or retirement home set up a bird feeding station. It can be very simple--just keep it easy to maintain and in an easy viewing place. You could offer to buy the seed in large quantity to be kept in a metal garbage can for them. You could get it from the Audubon sales!

Another law of birding. Unusual birds stay in view only long enough for you to begin lifting the binoculars to your eyes. It makes no difference whether the binocs are right on the table in front of you or in the back bedroom, the bird flies away as you raise them.

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

FROM THE HEART OF THE SWAMP

By MICHAEL DAWSON

Asst. Sanctuary Manager, Francis Beidler Forest



A woman came into the visitor center with three 10 year old boys and asked "How are the snakes?" "What do you mean?" I said. (I choked back my desire to say, "The snakes are fine, how are you?") She asked if there were a lot of snakes "out there" (hands waving in the general direction of the swamp). I told her that while there are snakes in the swamp-- at this time of the year we don't see them very often-- but there is always a chance of seeing one. That's all it took! Right in front of me she came down with what I will refer to as the SNAKE VAPORS. (Do you remember in old movies when a southern belle, confronted with something decidedly distasteful, would fan her face, nearly faint and complain of having the vapors!) This woman began to thump her chest and fan her face, all the while repeating, "Oh mercy, Oh mercy!" as she whimpered, "Let's go boys!" The boys by now had discovered the visitor center with its displays and fish and turtles and interesting things to buy and --LIVE SNAKES! They were not in a hurry to leave. Boys! she insisted to no avail. I suggested that instead of taking the boardwalk, they look around the center. I cautioned her, not to look into "that particular aquarium," as I motioned to our three captive snakes. "Oh mercy, Oh mercy," it began again as she about-faced and huddled by the entrance door thumping her chest, in the throes of a full scale snake vapors attack. She finally managed to corral the boys and off they went.

On the surface, this affair struck me as humorous, but deeper down I realized it was rather sad. WE live in a very pretty part of this incredible planet. It's an earth filled with fascinating creatures and fantastic plants. yet the fear of snakes has ruined the outdoors for this woman. How can you enjoy being outside if the mention of snakes send you into a panic? The things she must miss....

In my years at Beidler Forest, where in some seasons I see snakes daily, I have noticed there are two types of snake fear. I am no psychologist (as if you were wondering) but I will endeavor to explain the difference. The first is what I call SNAKEAPHOBIA. This is the illogical, unreasonable, almost primal fear of snakes. It makes no sense and there is little the individual or the well-meaning naturalist can do to combat it. It is a bona fide phobia and can only be conquered with professional help. My mother-in-law is a snakeaphobic. Even a picture of one will give her the snake vapors! I once persuaded her - reluctantly - to go on the boardwalk. We saw a snake, 100 feet away, which caused her to cower behind my father-in-law. Foolishly, I talked her into looking at it through my binoculars. Bringing it into focus she screamed "Too close!" and nearly dropped the binoculars. The swamp, her hands shaking. She hasn't been on the walk since.

The second group of snake-fearing people I refer to as HERPETOLOGICALLY IGNORANT! I'm not saying they're either don't know many facts about snakes, or they haven't seen enough snakes to know how to identify them, or they are unaware of the valuable role snakes play in the ecosystem, or they know that some are poisonous, therefore ALL are poisonous! If it keeps you away from a potentially dangerous encounter with a poisonous snake, you might consider it a healthy fear. But--if it keeps you from enjoying the outdoors or limits your ability to appreciate nature-- then it is a pointless fear. It is gratifying to educate someone who was previously petrified of snakes, to watch them touch one and see their face light up in amazement. If there is a lesson to this column or to our snake education efforts, it is this --SNAKES NEED TO BE RESPECTED, NOT FEARED! If you don't know what it is. LEAVE IT ALONE. Snakes are not evil, nor intent on hurting humans! Throughout the ages information has been the enemy of fear, and snake fear is no different. Learn about snakes and your fear may turn to interest!

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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. 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, Don Watts(797-6783), Treasurer, Maurice Snook(849-9485).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Ed Blitch, Patricia Giddens, Sid Goff, Polly Holden, David Huff, Jeremy James, Jane Lareau, Terrence Larimer, Lee Lowder, Rose Mitchell, Hayes Patterson, Jan Snook, Herbert Macmurphy.

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).