

Backyard Birder

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in early October. I always wonder if they could be the ones, or the descendants of some that got out of the cage I had a long time ago.

I noticed an unusual red-winged blackbird for several days. The feathers were gone around his neck and he had two huge growths, each the size of his head, in front of his throat. Binoculars showed that they were not ticks. Were they tumors of some sort? An external crop? The bird seemed to be getting along very well, eating easily, etc. We also had a leucistic hummingbird which was actually quite flashy looking. Our son reported seeing an eagle from his house in the Jedburg section of Summerville.

Alma Holroyd in the Old Village of Mount Pleasant, as well as Nelson Taylor, had hummingbirds still at the feeders through October. There are always reports of hummingbirds throughout the winter from Mount

Pleasant. Alma used a most poetic metaphor in describing a large flock of starlings as waving across the sky like a black lace scarf. What was interesting, however, was the flock's descent into large evergreens and then plunging into a nearby dogwood tree by platoons and devouring all the berries, often flying off with whole clusters in their mouths. Alma first thought she saw cedar waxwings in the dogwood, and was most surprised to find they were starlings. She also reports hearing great-horned owls in the Old Village.

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By the time you read this, I will have returned from three weeks in Africa. We're traveling with my old birding buddy, Dave Harvey, and his wife.

"Studying birds leads people to change their view of the world." (Unknown) Keep those cards and letters coming. There should be lots of good stuff out there now that it's cold. Bruce W. Krucke, 7352 Toogoodoo Road, Yorges Island, SC 29449. Phone: 889-6191 or FAX: 889-2873.

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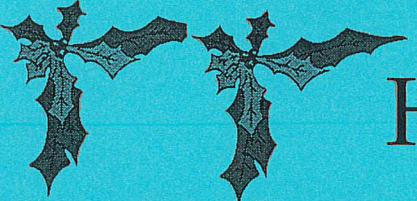


The Lesser Squawk

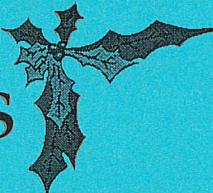
Newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society

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Happy Holidays



Program Features Raptors, Education Center

Kiawah, a handsome barred owl, and Dakota, a magnificent red-shouldered hawk shared the stage with a feisty kestrel and representatives of the Charleston Raptor Center, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at last month's meeting. The evening's topics were the new Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center and the Charleston Raptor Center.

The Sewee Center, which is scheduled to open in October next year, will be located on Highway 17 north in Awendaw, 18 miles northeast of Charleston just past the turnoff for Cape Romain. The center, which has been three years in the making, is a joint project involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the U.S. Forest Service, said Larry Davis of the USFWS. It was designed by the same firm that did the Aquarium in Chattanooga and is developing the Charleston Aquarium.

The center will be an exciting addition to the study of the natural sciences in the Lowcountry, pointed out Sharon Rhodes of the Forest Service. It will offer exhibits about the forest and refuge ecosystems, an auditorium where an orientation film will play, two environmental education classrooms/laboratories, live raptor and red wolf displays, nature trails and an outdoor

classroom. "The center will be the hub for a major conservation education program for the tri-county area surrounding the forest," said Rhodes.

Educational workshops on forest and refuge management programs will be conducted for area teachers and the teachers will be able to utilize the center's classrooms and laboratories for environmental education activities. The center will also serve as an orientation site for natural resource management and for biologists or students visiting the region. It's projected that the center will receive approximately 200,000

visitors in its first year.

The Charleston Raptor Center will collaborate with the center on an exhibit featuring live birds in an aviary (the birds will be rotated). The four-year-old center is located on land adjacent to the site where the new Sewee center is being built. The Raptor Center is a non-profit organization which provides medical care and rehabilitation to injured and orphaned birds of prey. The center treats about 125 birds a year, releasing about half that number, said director Jim Elliott.

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Conservation Report

Hog Bill Poses Threat

By Jane Lareau

A little-known piece of legislation is moving through the South Carolina Legislature, but it could have a big impact on South Carolina.

The Hog Farm Bill would make South Carolina more vulnerable to large-scale hog and poultry farming. It passed the House and is before the Senate as S. 406. It was one vote away from passage when the legislature adjourned last year, and will be taken up when the legislature reconvenes in January. North Carolina passed a similar bill and then rocketed to the second largest hog producing state in the nation with nine million hogs in the coastal plain.

South Carolina's proposed hog bill would do two things:

1. It would prevent any county from having input regarding, or review of, proposed hog or poultry facilities in areas that are unzoned or zoned for agriculture.

2. It would block neighbors from being able to file nuisance actions against

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January Program

Jan. 10 8 p.m.

The Charleston Museum
360 Meeting Street

Polly Holden, owner of The Audubon Shop, will present the latest in technology in field optics, including telescopes and binoculars.

Christmas Bird Counts

Five Christmas Bird Counts are scheduled for the Holiday Season. Experienced birders and anyone who would like to learn to identify species are invited to attend. Birders spend eight hours in the field and send their compiled results to "American Birds" to be published. Participants should dress for warmth and comfort, be prepared to do some hiking and bring a lunch. There is a nominal fee per person. Here's the schedule:

McClellanville

Dec. 17

Meet at 6:45 a.m. at Graham's

Store

Contact: Perry Negeen 556-3841

Charleston

Dec. 24

Meet at 6:30 a.m. at Gregorie

Texaco Station, Hw. 17 North, Mt. Pleasant
Contact: Ed Blitch — 795-5277

Litchfield/Pawley's Island
Dec. 29
Contact: Jack Peachy

Santee Wildlife Refuge
Dec. 30
Meet at 6:45 a.m. at the Refuge
Visitors Center
Contact: Bob Wood — 786-5186

ACE Basin

Dec. 31

Meet at 7 a.m. at the Woods
Brothers Store, Hw. 17 South at
Green Pond
Contact: David Chamberlain

— 884-0019

Bivalve Bash for the Birds

The CNHS Christmas Oyster Roast is set for Saturday, December 9, at 5 p.m. at Fort Johnson. In addition to steamed oysters, there will be hot dogs and Reese's famous fish stew. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. Contact Reese Inabinett, 884-3997, for tickets. To get to Fort Johnson, either take Folly Road or the James Island Expressway to Harborview Road. Turn left onto harborview from Folly Road and follow it down to Fort Johnson Road, take a left and follow to Fort Johnson.

Bird Calendars Still Available

If you haven't ordered your Audubon Calendar, now's the time to claim yours. Order extras for family and friends. The cost is \$5.00 each. Either pick them up at the next meeting, or call Lee Lowder at 769-4186 or write him at 1415 Westchase Drive, Charleston, SC 29407, to order by mail (add 50 cents for postage).

Hog Bill Poses Threat

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hog or poultry facilities.

Now, why would an industry want to tie its neighbors' hands regarding nuisance laws and local zoning? The answer lies in the awesome pollution that emanates from millions of hogs.

Consider:

Each hog produces the waste of two to four humans. Millions of gallons of feces and urine sit in open lagoons — some as large as seven acres. This summer, seven lagoons broke pouring more than 37 million gallons of untreated sewage into North Carolina's coastal river basins.

Four months later, a fecal sludge sits on the bottom of the rivers. Humans are warned to stay away from the water; shellfish beds are indefinitely closed. No one has calculated the damage to North Carolina's tourism or fishing industries.

North Carolina scientists report an 800 percent increase in ammonia and attribute the rise to the airborne transit from open sewerage lagoons. The ammonia falls back to earth in rain, contributing to massive fish kills.

Some lagoons are leaking nitrates into ground water, making drinking water near hog farms unsafe.

New research is showing property values near hog farms can decline because of the smell and flies.

If this concerns you, contact your senator and ask him or her to send the hog farm bill back to committee so that all South Carolinians will get a fair chance to discuss and debate it.

Tell your senator that any bill passed to promote hog or poultry farming in South Carolina should meet the following requirements: protect the public health; protect small farmers from being squeezed out of business; protect the state's ground water, air quality, estuaries and fisheries and the recreation, tourism and commercial industries associated with them; and preserve local communities rights to protect citizens from industries that may harm public health, the environment, or local property values.

For more information, call Jane Lareau at (803) 723-8035.



Backyard Birder

Every year about this time, I begin to wonder what's the matter? Where are all the birds? And I get calls and notes from people concerned about their unused feeders. Then I remember that natural food is in abundance in the early fall and the birds don't really need the feeders. The cold snap and snow they're having up north in mid-November may be a real boost for us by sending the birds a little southward to find easy food.

There have been a few winter birds seen already. Nelson Taylor always lets us know when the feeder regulars first appear. The white-throated sparrows arrived Oct. 24 in McClellanville. (That's the same day my husband took a message from Van Atkins that there was a roseate spoonbill at Huntington Beach State Park.) We've had both white-throated and chipping sparrows, but only a few to go with the solo goldfinch that stops in every few days. We also had an escapee ring-necked turtle dove (Continued on page 4)

Program Features Raptors, Education Center

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The injured birds have been shot, poisoned, become tangled in barbed wire (true especially of owls) and are hit by cars all the time due to their habit of hunting along roads, said center associate director Linda Flanagan. Injured birds are offered critical care, intermediate care and flight rehabilitation. Only the birds that can make it on their own are released. "We are not in the business of releasing birds that can't survive in the world," explained Flanagan. "Some don't make it. It's a very hard decision for us to make." Forty to 50

birds are at the center at any one time.

A second mandate is to provide educational programs for the public to increase awareness of the ecological importance of raptors and environmental issues that affect them. Flanagan makes more than 40 presentations a year to schoolchildren statewide. Her most persuasive assistants are the birds themselves. Raptors, like Dakota and Kiawah, whose injuries prevent them from being able to return to the wild, become ambassadors and accompany her on trips. The Charleston Raptor Center is staffed almost entirely by

volunteers and supported solely by private contributions.

At the end of the meeting, the Charleston Natural History Society presented the center with a contribution of \$500.

For more information on the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center, call the U.S. Forest Service, Wambaw Ranger District, McClellanville, at (803) 887-3257 or the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, Awendaw at (803) 928-3368. To learn more about the Charleston Raptor Center, call director Jim Elliott at (803) 928-2494.