

Backyard Birder
(Continued from page 3)

or two while the hawk looked around and got his bearings. Then the hawk flew away with the goldfinch in his talons. I was blaming any bare feeder period on the neighbor's cats — maybe the hawk is the culprit. Walter Swanson is plagued by neighbor cats also.

Chickadees have hatched five babies in one of our bluebird houses and a titmouse is sitting on four eggs in the other one. I saw the poor bluebirds looking around so I mended an old house and put it on the pole to the purple martin (starling) house.

The bluebirds had a good start on their nest in it in less than an hour. Carolina wrens have built a nest and laid four eggs in an old cooler in the carport. We go right by it all day long — maybe the wrens feel safer from the cats with us around. Mid-April brought blue grosbeaks and indigo buntings to our feeder. Two great

birds for color-blind bird watchers.

Isn't it nice to see hummers around again? Here's a hint for cleaning the hard to get bits of mildew out of your hummingbird feeders. Put about ten BBs and a couple of denture cleaning tablets with water in the feeders and agitate. Rinse well and refill. Did you know there are at least 70 species of birds documented feeding at hummingbird feeders: woodpeckers, orioles, warblers, chickadees, wrens, kinglets, thrashers, sparrows, tanagers and finches.

A good place to see owls is in evergreens near bird feeders. They have found that to be a good place to

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hunt because mice and voles come out at night to eat at the base of feeders on the dropped seed.

Don't stop feeding now that warmer weather is finally here. Natural feed is at its lowest now. Peanut butter is particularly popular among harried birds feeding young. It's quick and nutritious and easy to catch! Whole peanuts are particularly popular too. A study monitored a wren making 1,217 trips in one day bringing food to its young.

Bruce W. Krucke, 7352 Toogoodoo Road, Yonges Island, SC 29449. Phone: 889-6191.



The Lesser Squawk

Newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society

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May 1996

An evening with Peter Dunne

Birder's talk to benefit Charleston raptor center

By Jane Lareau

Enter Peter Dunne's world and meet a sexually frustrated Harris' Hawk, a black vulture on his way to a picnic, a raven who quotes poetry at the death of an eagle, a California condor who dreams and a sharp-shinned hawk who sermonizes.

Dunne will give a lecture on Saturday, June 1 at 7 p.m. at the Charleston Museum. There will be reception at 7 p.m. and the program will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Next to Roger Tory Peterson, Pete Dunne may be the most famous birder living today. Dunne is Director of Natural History for the New Jersey Audubon Society and writes columns for half a dozen birding magazines. In 1975, he made a trip to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania that changed his life. As he watched a thousand broad-winged hawks pass over the North Lookout, the 25-year-old Dunne promised himself he would spend the rest of his life watching birds.

He's done even better. He's brought birding to thousands of people in an accessible, entertaining way, while emphasizing conservation and respect for the species. He's even made it glamorous. He organized the World Series of Birding — a 24-hour birding competition that attracts teams from all over the world and raises nearly half a million dollars annually for bird conservation. In 1987, propelled by a growing concern for declining numbers of migrating birds, Dunne initiated "Operation Flight Path," an education and public



awareness campaign to protect migratory bird habitat.

"The Wind Masters," his most recent book and the focus of his program, explores the lives of North America's birds of prey. Founded in fact, written as fiction, each chapter

selects one species to be the subject and some key element of raptor biology to serve as the theme — hunting, courting, mating, nest building, habitat establishment, flight, migration, hatching and dying.

The lecture is sponsored by the Charleston Raptor Center, the Charleston Natural History Society and the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League (SCCCL). Proceeds will benefit the Charleston Raptor Center. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door and may be purchased by calling the Charleston Raptor Center at 928-3494 or writing the center at P.O. Box 1247, Charleston, SC 29402. You may also call Jane Lareau at 723-8035 at the SCCCL.

Birds eat the fish, that live in the marsh, that's being drained, that....

By Lee Lowder

"So you're with Audubon," said the staffer, (pretty much the same way one would observe, "so you have head lice.") "I thought you people were only interested in birds?" This ingratiating greeting appeared to be the mantra of many of the senatorial staffers I spoke with on behalf of National Audubon's Living Oceans Program. Fortunately though, their lack of knowledge was not symptomatic of a lack of interest. My first foray as a D.C. lobbyist rejuvenated my belief that being an environmentalist is not such a bad avocation after all.

I knew my trip held promise when the conservative staffer of a very conservative senator confided, "the senator wants us to start paying more attention to you people. We've gotten a lot of flack from constituents who support the endangered species act." Yes! Democracy does work, (albeit excruciatingly slowly). This new environmental sensitivity offered me an excellent opportunity to press Audubon's concerns regarding the fisheries industry, estuary protection and bycatch. My secondary goal was (Continued on page 3)

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Bruce Krucke 889-6191

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Bob Chinn 552-7884

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The Lesser Squawk, newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society, is published monthly except for the months of June, July and August. The deadline for copy is the 10th of each month.

May Program
Neo-Tropical Migrants
Jane Lareau
Tuesday, May 14
7 p.m.

The Charleston Museum
360 Meeting Street

Neo-tropical migratory birds will be the topic of the program for the May meeting. Jane Lareau, director of forestry programs for the South Carolina Coastal Conservation league and a Charleston Natural History Society executive board member, will discuss what can be done about the recent decline in neo-tropical migrants, such as tanagers, vireos, warblers, thrushes and all the other birds that arrive here in the spring. The causes are varied — loss of habitat, pollution, and predators such as cowbirds. The news has been especially disheartening because it hasn't been clear what we can do as individuals to stem the loss. Jane will provide some answers to that question.

The slate of new officers and executive board members for the 1996-97 year will also be presented for a vote.

Nominations for Officers

The proposed slate of officers and executive board for the 1996 Charleston Natural History Society board are:

President, Lee Lowder; Vice President, Jane Lareau; Secretary, Bobbin Huff; and Treasurer, Maurice Snook. Executive board member nominees are: Bob Chinn, Karen McKenzie, Julian Harrison, Sandy Inabinet, Mac MacMurphy, Cornelia Gibbs, Bob Hamlin, Sara Brunson and Maura Lake.

May Field Trip
Sunday, May 26
Wambaw Creek Bridge
7:30 a.m. to noon

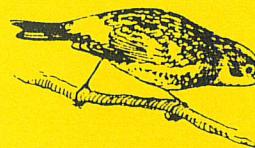
Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Gregorie's Texaco Station, Highway 17 North and 41 for a half-day trip to Elmwood and Wambaw Creek. We will observe swamp warblers and swallow-tailed kites in the Francis Marion National Forest. Bring insect repellent and picnic lunch.

CNHS to bring bird lore to classrooms

In conjunction with Charleston Youth Services, Charleston Natural History Society members will introduce 120 Courtney Middle School students to birds of the Lowcountry through a classroom program and field trip. CNHS members will visit 7th grade classes at the school on May 7 to give presentations about birds. The visit will follow a video on birds which students will view on May 6. On May 17, CNHS volunteers will accompany the students on field trips to four parks in the city of Charleston to identify birds. The students will develop a display on the birds they saw and will present their displays at the Charleston Convention and Visitor's Bureau on May 25. Students will also visit the Charleston Museum to view displays on birds.

Dawn Watch At Beidler

The Francis Beidler Forest opens at 5:30 a.m. the first Sunday of every month through August (except for May 5) to accommodate birders who want to seek out owls in the moonlit forest and catch the first burst of activity as the sun rises.



By Bruce Krucke

Well, I guess I've blown all my credibility with my announcement last month that the goldfinches would leave. In normal years, that's what happens, but this year the weather was so unusual that the vast majority of the goldfinches never left. It's still quite possible that we'll see lots more of them in late April and early May. Those who have told me more about all the finches they still had included: Van Atkins, Walt Swanson, Richard Clasrgrounder, Scott Hall, Cherry Snead, Connie Puckett, Paul Kushubar and Roy Scoggins. They cover Mount Pleasant, downtown Charleston, West Ashley and the islands.

Van has had a lot of time for backyard birding lately as he recovers from a knee replacement. As he lies there on the knee bending machine, he has seen early hummingbirds, an orchard oriole, yellow warbler, cedar waxwings, white eyed vireo, pairs of downy and red bellied woodpeckers, ruby crowned kinglet, and indigo buntings, among all the regulars. He has a pond with a waterfall — that and the suet seem to attract a big variety. Ben Smith was in the Francis Marion Forest birding with Charlie

Walters just a month after his open heart surgery. Speaking of which, thanks to all of you who inquired about Bill. He's doing beautifully. It's been interesting to find how many people have had by-pass and valve surgery.

In early April we had an unusual sighting. A parula warbler spent hours sitting on the suet stick hanger looking in the window and singing. It was wonderful to see him just a foot away and it was astounding to see him sing. I always assumed that forced trill came from his throat. Actually, the trill is made by the rapid movement of his lower mandible. It was a fast as a downy woodpecker's hammering — another thing I can't

ACE Basin by boat

Nature lovers will have a chance to see the ACE Basin by boat on Saturday, May 11, during field trips marking National Migratory Bird Day. There will be four trips, each limited to 25 people. The first three will begin at 8 a.m. and will last most of the day. The fourth is an owl prowl at the ACE Basin Refuge, beginning at 7 p.m. To register, call Karen McGee, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department at (803) 727-4707.

Birds eat the fish that live in the marsh that....

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to dispel the bizarre notion that we, "you people," only care about things and not people. I've never met an environmentalist whose foremost concern was not the quality of life for humans. What we have all come to realize is that the quantity of life, diversity, has a direct impact upon the quality of life. Quantity - Quality. Simple.

After 12 meetings in two days, (by the way, our own political icon Strom Thurmond sends his regards), I left Washington more hopeful than I arrived. Proud that the 80 per cent of Americans who consider themselves environmentalists have spoken up for clean air, water and diversity. Before I start to sound like a Pollyanna, let me add the battle is not over. There are powerful forces of ignorance and greed desperately trying to weaken environmental protections. The good news is there is disunity within the ranks and many congressmen are reassessing their anti-environmental positions. That is, all the ones interested in being reelected.

believe is possible. Our first painted bunting came on April 11. That same day I saw a swallow-tailed kite over route 165 south of Summerville. He was only about 20 feet over the road so it was a terrific view. On the 15th an immature sharp-shinned hawk dived on the feeder and got two goldfinches! one got away, but the other was held on the ground for a minute

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Observations

Bob Chinn reports he has received many of calls from out-of-towners with questions about bird identification and good birding locations. Subjects include abandoned bluebirds' eggs, a dove abandoned by its mate and a sick blue jay.

On April 10, fulvous whistling ducks were seen near Castle Pinckney by Bruce Krucke's son, Kurt..

Sky Watch

- Upcoming meteor showers
- promise some shows by Mother Nature this summer. Appearances are as follows: (This information was provided by: the North American Meteor Network home page on the World Wide Web. This page provides information to amateur meteor observers.)
- South Delta Aquarids: Peak on July 27/28. Full moon.
- Observe from midnight to sunrise.
- Alpha Capricornids: Peak on July 29/30. Full moon. Observe from midnight to sunrise.
- Perseids: Peak on Aug. 11/12. Near new moon. Good conditions. Observe from sunset to sunrise.
- Alpha Aurigids: Peak on Aug/ Sep 31/1. Near full moon.
- Observe from midnight to sunrise.