

The Lesser Squawk
Charleston Natural History Society
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The Lesser Squawk

Newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society

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*Christmas is
for the Birds*
(See the Backyard
Birder for details)

CNHS Mission Statement:
The Charleston Natural History Society is a nonprofit environmental organization and chapter of the National Audubon Society that actively promotes awareness, appreciation and conservation of the natural environment through educational programs, field trips, conservation projects, sponsored research and social activities.



RSVP to
Bobbin Huff, #28 21st Ave., Isle of Palms, SC 29451
or call her at 886-6911
(just so we can be sure to have enough oysters)
\$12/adult; \$6/children 6-12;
children under 6 are free
TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR

Annual Oyster Roast
Sunday DECEMBER 7th
4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at
GOLDBUG ISLAND
(off the Sullivan's Island Causeway)
There will be oysters, hot dogs,
chili, potato salad, desserts,
soft drinks, beer and wine
AND
Door Prizes & Good Cheer

Wood Storks are one of only three species of storks found in the Americas and the only one to be found in the United States. Their original nesting grounds included all coastal states from Texas to South Carolina, but by the 1930s, the only known nesting grounds were in Georgia and Florida.

Positive evidence of their nesting in South Carolina was noted in 1981. Since that time, they have expanded their nesting habitat from an area in the ACE basin to most of coastal South Carolina. The second largest nesting colony is at the Santee Coastal Reserve near the North Carolina border. They are closely related to storks and cranes, and quite different from the wading birds we are used to in the Lowcountry.

Rather than using the quiet stalking of herons and egrets, Wood Storks feed by feel. They prefer to feed in groups where the water level has dropped. The lower water level gives the fish less room in which to hide and provides the Storks a more concentrated feeding area. The feeding group constantly move about to frighten fish from their hiding places, thereby helping each other to

capture fish. One adult Wood Stork consumes about one pound of fish per day.

If there is insufficient food available the Wood Storks will nest or will abandon their nests. On average, Wood Storks lay three eggs, but may lay as many as five.

The Wood Stork's pattern of living and reproducing follows the natural pattern of rain and drought. These natural patterns of rain and drought have, of course, been greatly altered by humans. Drought conditions exist in South Florida which interferes with the nesting and the winter habitat traditionally utilized by Wood Storks, although they continue to nest in central Florida.

Wood Storks can be seen in South Carolina from March through November (although a few young birds are spotted during December and January).

Wood Stork nests are thin platforms of sticks lined with twigs and leaves. There may be as 20 to 25 nests in the same tree (and they build nests in trees 100' or more).

Although the increase in Wood Stork nesting in South Carolina is encouraging, the species is still limited by the

decimation of their winter habitat in south Florida (the Everglades).

New Arrivals:
The first recorded birth of manatees (twins, in fact) in South Carolina occurred this year near Hilton Head Island.

As many of you noticed, the November Squawk failed to fly in a timely manner because of a problem at the print shop. This prevented many of you the opportunity to come to the November meeting which featured Tom Murphy, an expert on Wood Storks, among other things (manatees being another). In an attempt to make this up to you, I have tried to share Tom's informative lecture with you in this article.

President's Reflections

By Jane Lareau

I have some welcome news for you.

You don't have to spend a lot on Christmas presents for your friends and family this year. In fact, you should not spend a lot for them. You should not feel guilty about this, and you should beg them not to buy anything for you either.

Short of selling your car and walking everywhere, the single most important thing you can do for the wildlife habitat that birds live in is to stop fueling this insane consumption machine we call our economy. It is tragic that this season has come to represent one thing: consumption. Consumption has nothing to do with Christmas, it has nothing to do with religion or spirituality, it has nothing to do with the love of friends and family.

It has everything to do with credit card debt and overworked adults who spend long days away from their families as they work to pay for products they can't even remember purchasing. It has everything to do with a nation generally not able to save enough money to prepare for retirement.

It has everything to do with an earth that has been mined, logged and damned to feed factories that use and

spew astonishing chemicals into our air and water as they produce a mind-boggling array of stuff for us to use and then discard into an ever growing number of landfills. It is impossible to enumerate just how damaging our consumption is to the environment. And, no doubt, to our souls as we try to make ourselves happy with things that cannot bring us happiness.

Do your part this season to shed love, light and goodness in a meaningful way. Buy little and buy less. (It is virtually impossible to buy nothing -- I've tried and even I can't get away with it.) Insist to your friends and family how seriously you mean it when you tell them not to get you anything -- or not to get you much.

I have a close friend who taught me how. He helped me one time with something that was important to me. I bought him a present -- a framed photograph which I thought was lovely. He accepted the picture and thanked me, and then said, "I'm sorry, Jane, I thought you knew I don't want things. I'm doing what I can to reduce the number of things I own. I'll give this to my office, but please don't ever buy me anything again." I never have. Let's give ourselves and others permission to stop the mindless consumption. I'll start. If you were thinking of getting me something for Christmas, please don't. And thank you.

**PLEASE COME OUT
AND COUNT --
THE MORE, THE BETTER**
For more information call
Ed Blitch at 795-5277



Christmas Bird Count

Don't forget the Bird Count on the 28th of December. The Count is a 15-mile diameter circle (center approximately at U.S. 17 and Seewee Road). Several groups attempt to count all birds in their area on the day of the Count. This is done all over the U.S. and the results are compiled to come up with an approximation of the distribution of birds at a particular time of year.

You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. The more eyes, the better the count and the more area we can cover.

The meeting place is at Gregorie's Texaco at the intersection of U.S. 17 and S.C. Hwy. 41 at 6:45 a.m. on December 28th. National Audubon charges a \$5.00 fee to assist them in defraying the cost of publication of the national results of the count.

Backyard Birder

By Bob Chinn for Van Atkins

Winter has arrived! Not meteorologically, but bird wise. I have had Juncoes, Purple Finches and Gold Finches at my feeders. A lot of Yellow Rump Warblers and Sharp Shinned and Cooper's Hawks patrol my neighborhood frequently.

I have seen more Cooper's Hawks than usual this year. Maybe they are making a small recovery.

Ruth, from the Summerville area, called on Sunday the 9th about a Cooper's that broke its leg in a window collision. I referred her to the Seewee Center and they got the Hawk to the S.C. Center for Birds of Prey. Window collisions can be a serious problem. If you have large patio doors or glass in your patio/deck, put up silhouettes to warn the birds. I had two Sharpie collisions on tinted glass around my deck. I put up Great Horned Owl pictures, and haven't had but one problem in three years (a Cowbird).



Clifford Beaton had a Junco on the 15th, the earliest he has seen on the Isle of Palms. He also had Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser and Lesser Scaup on a pond at the golf course on IOP.

The Eagles are re-building their nest on Moore's Landing Road. It is very near, if not in the same tree as the last one.

Don't forget the birds during the Holidays. Decorate a tree or bush with seed bells, suet cakes, popcorn strings, baskets of nuts or seeds and some bright ribbons. Also garlands of raisins and/or cranberries attract several species.

GOOD BIRDING!

Contact Van Atkins with your backyard sightings at 766-7000 or fax 556-1592 or e-mail vatkina@awod.com or call Bob Chinn at 552-7884 (he also does the Unusual Sightings).

Unusual Sightings

By Bob Chinn

Golden Eagle at Moore's Landing on the 15th (reported by a visitor from Michigan and a local fisherman)

Russell Tyler had a Great Black Backed Gull in McClellanville on the 16th

Northern Gannets were spotted at Folly Beach on the 22nd by Bob Chinn, Don Jones, Bob Harrison and Miss Sarah Taylor

Call Bob Chinn with your Unusual Sightings at 552-7884

December Open House at the McAlhany Sanctuary

Join us on Sunday, December 21st at the McAlhany Sanctuary. It's a perfect way to relax during the holiday season. For more information, please call Don Watts at 797-6783.

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