

December, January Busy Months for CNHS

By Maura Lake

December was a particularly busy month for us all. On Dec. 14, CNHS held its annual Oyster Roast at Fort Johnson. Everyone enjoyed themselves and the oysters were particularly good, I was told. I also know from personal experience that the chili, fish stew and hot dogs were excellent. Delighted door prize winners received a canoe trip for four at the Beidler Sanctuary for spring of 1997 and a \$50 gift certificate from The Audubon Shop. The weather was kind — no rain, but a bit of a cold wind. Our dedicated party planners even put up plastic "walls" to protect us from the wind. If you missed the Oyster Roast, plan to be there next year.

The Christmas Bird Count was held on Dec. 29. Dedicated birders went out to count birds in the 15-mile diameter area designated by the Charleston Natural History Society (the center of the area is at Sewee

Road and Highway 17 North) to count as many birds as possible during a 24-hour period. One of the most unusual birds spotted was a yellow breasted chat. Also seen were eagles, hawks, rufous-sided towhees, herons, egrets and more. The weather once again cooperated and the diligent bird counters had the advantage of a (reasonably) warm and sunny day. Afterwards the birders gathered at Cheves Leland's home on Porcher's Bluff for refreshments

while they compared notes and compiled lists for the final count: 148 species. We hope to see more of you when the Spring Bird Count comes around.

By David Huff

Participants in the January field trip to the new Sewee Visitor's Center enjoyed the hands-on displays and a beautiful educational film. After touring the center, participants took a walk down a new nature trail through old rice fields in I'on Swamp.

Become a Member of CNHS

All you have to do is subscribe to Audubon Magazine (\$20 for a year). Your membership in CNHS is automatic.

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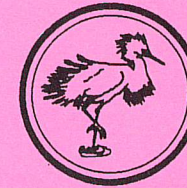
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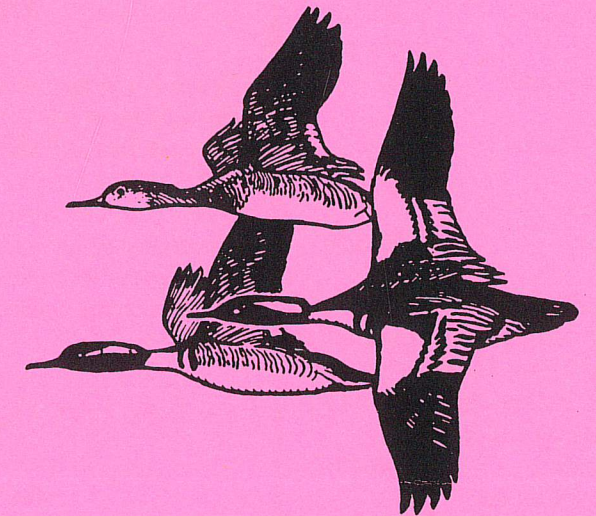
CNHS To Sponsor Audubon Adventures

By Sarah Brunson

This year, the Charleston Natural History Society is sponsoring 30 subscriptions to *Audubon Adventures*, a National Audubon Society educational tool directed at fourth through sixth graders. Working in conjunction with the science liaisons for the Charleston County School District, the subscriptions are being sent to 26 of the 44 elementary schools in the county, two of the 18 middle schools and one home schooling group. Each subscription costs \$35. Next year, we plan to extend our range and include more schools from other counties.

Each child in the classroom receives a newsletter six times a year and membership cards as part of the program. The teacher receives a resource guide which offers background information and hands-on activities to help them interpret the newsletters to the children. The topics are varied and differ with every newsletter. Titles this year are: "Autumn Wildlife Goes for Gold," "Songbirds Shine in Springtime," "Animal Talk: More Than Meets the Eye and Ear," "Those Amazing Slithery Snakes," "The Hidden World of Ponds," and "Marine Mammals: Surf and Turf."

Thirty-five dollars is quite an investment. By having teachers share the newsletter, we reach at least one child with every dollar spent. To make sure the *Audubon Adventures* subscription is of value, we will run an essay contest to see if the students



like the subscription and what they learned. We will also do a brief survey of teachers to see how they used the newsletter and resource guide

Why is it important to keep distributing *Audubon Adventures* to students? The publication introduces children to the National Audubon Society while they learn about the environment using these high quality educational tools. It gives students a sense of "professional membership" and is an

information source akin to a professional journal. The money for *Audubon Adventures* comes primarily from membership money and our annual birdseed sale. We can only continue to sponsor classrooms with your support and enthusiasm!

I would like to link *Audubon Adventures* with local efforts. Please call me if you or anyone you know is interested in speaking to the students who are participating in Audubon Adventures or helping to take them on field trips that match their newsletter topics.

Other Education Notes

- Occasionally, I get a call asking for a speaker at one of the local schools. I am trying to put together a resource list of speakers to fill these requests. Please call me if you are interested.

- On March 23, from 10:30 to 5 p.m. We are participating in Kids Fair. We need people to sit at the booth and run through an easy project with the children who come. Please call if you can help for some or all of the day.

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February Program

"Sex in the Wild"
Dr. Jessica Young
Coastal Carolina University
Tuesday, Feb. 14
7 p.m.
The Charleston Museum
360 Meeting Street
(Meeting and John Streets)

Dr. Jessica Young will give us rare insight into what may possibly become a new species of bird! Young, who specializes in behavioral ecology, genetics and evolution at Coastal Carolina University, will present: "A Natural History of the North American Grouse: Can Too Much Sex Cause Extinction?" Dr. Young will show amazing photographs and possibly a video of her work with ptarmigan and grouse in the United States and Canada. Please come and welcome her to Charleston and for that matter, South Carolina. She's only lived here three weeks! (Let's show off some of that Charleston hospitality.)

An Invitation to Visit Bull's Island

Audubon Trip to Bull's Island
Saturday, Feb. 22
7:30 a.m. and 9 a.m.

Enjoy Bull's Island, a pristine barrier island, and all its flora and fauna. Part of the Cape Romaine National Wildlife Refuge, the island serves as a winter home for many bird species and also has quite a population of wild animals. Despite the damage still evident from Hurricane Hugo, the island has made a sizeable comeback.

There will be two boat trips. Meet at Moore's Landing to board boats either at 7:30 a.m. or 9 a.m. (Those on the first boat will enjoy the best birding.) Coffee and doughnuts will be served at the landing. The return boat trips will be at 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. The fee will be \$20 per person.

Members of the board will lead walks around the island. Bring a lunch, water, comfortable shoes and clothes suitable for the weather. If you plan to go, please call 577-7100 and leave a message indicating how many will be in your party, which boat you intend to take, and your phone number. Call early since there is a limit of the number of people per boat load.

For more information, call Bob Chinn at 552-7884 or Lee Lowder at 769-4186.

McAlhany Open Feb. 9

For those who haven't visited the CNHS McAlhany property, McAlhany will be open from dawn to dusk Sunday, Feb. 9 For directions, call Don Watts at 797-6783 or Maura Lake at (803) 889-3415.



By Bruce Krucke

Finally, some action at the feeders! Goldfinches, purple finches, juncos, chippies, white throats (41!), in addition to all the regulars. Robins and cedar waxwings completed the picture. I get very discouraged waiting for the natural food to be used up or covered with snow so that we get some interesting birds at the feeders. I hope you're enjoying good feeder populations too.

"It's time to be sure that your bluebird houses are cleaned out. The bluebirds are looking around now, as are the chickadees and titmouses."

Goldfinches and house finches graced the downtown feeders of Scott Hall on Lamboll Street. Cherie Pittillo observed a red-bellied woodpecker storing sunflower seeds in bark crevices like an acorn woodpecker does with nuts. Cherry Sneed came across a wood stork right in the middle of Church Flats Road, out here on the 6th of January! I wonder if it was an early or late sighting?

Trivia, trivia. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who lived 384 to 322 B.C., was the first person to make the study of birds a respectable science. What's the only bird besides nuthatches that moves headfirst down a tree trunk? (Answer at end.) When birds are asleep, they open their eyes often, probably to check the surroundings for predators.

It's time to be sure that your bluebird houses are cleaned out. The bluebirds are looking around now, as are the chickadees and titmouses. If you have several houses, there will always be one left for the bluebirds. Carolina wrens, of courses, will nest

Backyard Birder

almost anywhere. Some of the places reported are: in a pocket of an old shirt or jacket left hanging in the garage, abandoned hornets nests, air conditioners, door wreaths, anything on a garage shelf if you leave the door or window open. Let me know where the wrens nest at your house.

Every birding magazine I've looked at lately has an article about the importance of having a dead tree in your yard for the woodpeckers to excavate cavities that they will use this year and other cavity nesters will use in subsequent years. Most of the articles recommend "planting" a snag if you don't have a natural one. Has anyone done this? If so, what have been the results?

At this time of year I always let any

new readers know that this Bruce is a female, so they're not so shocked when I answer the phone. Also, don't get too used to it, because I've also decided to retire as the Backyard Birder editor at the end of this season. I've written this since 1984 and I think a fresh outlook is called for now. So everyone who's been saying, "I could do that!" get ready. Seriously, please contact Bobbin Huff, at 886-6911, if you'd be willing to write a bird column for the Squawk. But in the meantime, I'll be here for three more articles, so keep those cards and letters coming. Bruce W. Krucke, 7352 Toogoodoo Road, Yorges Island, SC 29449. Phone: (803) 889-6191.



Observations

1/15	1 cattle egret	McClellanville Texaco, on car	David Huff
1/24	24 snow buntings	Huntington Beach State Park by the jetties between the sand dunes & pond	Van Atkins

1/16 & 1/24	1 male Baltimore oriole	North Charleston	Bob Chinn
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(Bob observed this bird eating a caterpillar in his red maple tree, which is already blooming)

The Observations column includes unusual sightings, birds not usually found in this area, or seen at an unseasonal time. To report unusual sightings, call or write Bob Chinn at 552-7884, 7666 Chippendale Road, North Charleston, SC 29420.