

The Lesser Squawk
Charleston Natural History Society
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The Lesser Squawk

Newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society

affiliated with NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY 1970

FOUNDED 1905

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October 1997

CNHS Annual
Bird Seed Sale
Deadline 10/24!



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.



October Meeting

Tues. Oct. 14th @ 7:00 pm
Charleston Museum

The October Meeting features Dr. Richard Porcher, Dr. Julian Harrison and Dr. Brian Scholtens. The speakers will present lectures and slides in their respective specialties: Dr. Porcher: plants and plant communities; Dr. Harrison: amphibians, reptiles and birds; Dr. Scholtens: butterflies and other insects. Dr. Porcher and Dr. Harrison will focus on plants and animals that live at the McAlhany Sanctuary.

October Outings:

Saturday, Oct. 18th: Dr. Julian Harrison and Dr. Jean Everette (and Dr. Porcher if available) will provide a guided outing of the McAlhany property, pointing out the varied birds, plants, animals, amphibians and reptiles to be found at the Sanctuary. If you want to caravan, meet Dr. Harrison at 7:00 a.m. in the directly behind the Burger King at Hwys. 7 and 61. If you know your way, meet them at 8:00 a.m. at the Sanctuary. Bring food and drink, binoculars,

cameras and bug spray (optional) as the outing will continue until 3:00 p.m. For directions to the Sanctuary, please see page 1.

Saturday, Oct. 18th: Meet Dr. Brian Scholtens at the old Coast Guard Station on Folly Beach at 12:30 p.m. (yes, we have finally come up with an outing for sleepyheads). This expedition will feature the last of the migrating butterflies, as well as other interesting insects which inhabit the beach environment.

BECOME A MEMBER OF CNHS

Join the National Audubon Society (and receive its bi-monthly magazine) for \$20 per year and you automatically become a member of CNHS.

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____ TEL. _____
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MAIL TO: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O.
Box 51003, Boulder, CO 80323-1003 CHAPTER CODE U-51



Come see October at McAlhany

The McAlhany Sanctuary, located on the Edisto River near the town of Grover, SC, was generously donated to the Charleston Natural History Society by Mrs. Cleo T. McAlhany and her late husband Marvin (Mac) McAlhany. This 368 acre "Edisto River Camp" was dedicated by the Society on January 14, 1987 to the McAlhany's in recognition of their generous gift.

When you visit the Sanctuary, situated along one and one half miles of frontage on the Edisto River, you will find some spectacular fifty foot sloping bluffs and relatively rare limestone outcroppings. There is a nine-acre oxbow lake that has a long standing reputation for being one of the best fishing spots along the river. The Sanctuary is home to 9 major plant communities, 70 recorded species of birds (with more to be discovered) and abundant animal, reptile and amphibian life.

This month (as you may have guessed) our emphasis is on this Sanctuary. The October 14th membership meeting will feature Dr. Richard Porcher (plants and plant communities), Dr. Julian Harrison (amphibians, reptiles and birds) and Dr. Brian Scholtens (butterflies and other insects). Dr. Porcher and Dr. Harrison are frequent visitors to the Sanctuary and will feature slides and discussion of it's richness and wild nature. We also plan an outing with to the property on October 18th featuring Dr. Harrison, Dr. Jean Everette and Dr. Richard Porcher (if he can make it). Please see the "Outings" section for more details. The regular October Open House, which is an opportunity for everyone to come and just do what they feel like (with the exception of bringing their domestic animals), will follow on Sunday, October 19th.

If you have not visited the Sanctuary, this is the time to do so; if you have visited before, then you know that it is well worth the trip. DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy. 61 north to Hwy. 15 and turn right; follow Hwy. 15 to Grover; in Grover turn left onto Hwy. 19; just past the intersection of Hwy. 19 and County Road 26, you'll cross Cattle Creek; the entrance to the Sanctuary is on the left side of the road about 8 miles from Grover.



Before donating this property to the Society, the McAlhany's used the property as a getaway and meeting place for themselves and the people of the community. The oxbow was a peaceful fishing hole that provided the fish for many meals that were served either in the three-room cabin (with fireplace & screened porch) or the large covered picnic table area. It was the wish of the McAlhany's that the land be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. Inspired by the National Audubon's Beidler Forest, Mrs. McAlhany sought protection for the property through them, and with the guidance of Norm Brunswig, the land was transferred to the Society.



In keeping with the McAlhany's wishes the land is protected as a wildlife sanctuary. Old agricultural fields have been allowed to revert to natural vegetation and plantings have been made to provide the various wildlife with an environment favorable to them.

Boy Scout Troops from the tri-county area use the Sanctuary as a camping and outings area (they also assist in maintaining bluebird boxes, etc.). The Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Trail Commission in conjunction with the S.C. State Parks use a spot on the Edisto River as a camping area for overnight canoe trips. The Sierra Club and the S.C. Association of Naturalists also utilize the Sanctuary. Access is controlled, but the area is open for your use; to arrange for access contact Don Watts at 797-6783.

Unusual Sightings

By Bob Chinn

On Aug. 30th I spotted a golden-winged warbler at my feeder.

Charlie Waters and Perry Nugent enjoyed seeing the following at the Orangeburg Sod Farm:

Sandhill crane (possible)
White winged dove
Bobolinks
Horned larks
Least sandpiper
Western sandpiper
Pectoral sandpiper
Snipe
Greater & lesser yellowlegs
5 Golden plovers
4 Buff-breasted sandpipers
Blue-winged teals
27 Eastern kingbirds.

On Moore's Landing Road. Kind of makes you wish you had a sod farm, doesn't it?

Billie and I spotted an immature bald eagle (probably 3 years old) in the old nest tree on Sept. 6th.

On Sept. 8th I spotted a female Baltimore Oriole off Ashley Phosphate Road in North Charleston.

Please call me with any unusual wild sightings (whether at your feeder or elsewhere) please give me a call at 552-7884.

The Editor apologizes for the lack of an Unusual Sightings column in the September edition of the Squawk.

THE WINNER IS: JEREMY JAMES

Jeremy James won the trip to see a turtle hatching (complete with picnic). His name was picked from those who donated to the Turtle Fund in September.

If you missed the September meeting, you missed not only the opportunity to win the turtle trip, but very interesting lectures on two very different Lowcountry loggerhead turtle nesting projects - our own Botany Bay Plantation Project and the Cape Island Project which is the largest nesting area on the East Coast.



Burning Desire

By Jane Lareau

Wood smoke in the fall is a good thing. I've always felt that, without knowing why. It just went with Autumn, like falling leaves, pumpkins and football games. My childhood conviction, I've learned as an adult, was right. Woods smoke is a good thing. A vital thing, in fact, for birds, wild flowers, indeed for the Southern piney woods itself. Fifty-seven plant and animal species that are considered rare or endangered in

South Carolina are associated with the longleaf/grassland ecosystem. And this system survives only because of fire. Longleaf pine/grassland ecosystems ranged along the coastal plain from Virginia to Florida and over to Texas. It adapted to fire, thrives on fire, and dies without it; the exact opposite of the message we've been taught for 50 years by an overzealous Smoky Bear who was long on safety and short on biology. After decades of suppressing fires, ecologists and foresters alike know that these nature forests must burn regularly (at least every two to three years) or the ecosystem itself disappears and is replaced by another, completely different ecosystem.

Wildlife also adapted to these periodic fires. Bachman sparrows rely on them. So do the nuthatches, woodpeckers, warblers, quail, turkey and scores of other birds that live here full time or just pass through during migration. So do a long list of salamanders, snakes, frogs and other forest dwellers. But forest managers are increasingly finding themselves under pressure not to burn. It comes from motorists who resent being re-routed around a road in the forest that is covered with wood smoke. Do your part to support native wildlife and this ecosystem. Learn about fire's natural role in restoring balance to habitat that has long been out of balance. Tell your elected leaders to make sure foresters and land managers are able to conduct controlled burns.

Backyard Birder

By Van Atkins

There have been some migrating warblers at my bird feeder, including the yellow, common yellow throat, palm, prairie and American redstart.

On Sept. 9th Ben Smith spotted the following at his bird bath and feeders: Northern waterthrush, common yellow-throat, red-eye and white-eye vireos, black & white warbler, American redstart, painted bunting & summer tanager & ten regulars that are always around.

A golden-winged warbler visited Bob Chinn's feeder on Aug. 30th which is a once in a lifetime bird for him. On Sept. 6th he was blessed with a brown-headed nuthatch.

Mike Aldenderfer saw the pied-billed grebes return to his pond. The logger-head shrike and eastern king-birds were still at the pond in early September.

Dennis Forsythe reported American redstarts, black & white warblers and red-eyed vireos. Charlie Waters also saw red and white eyed vireos and palm and prairie warblers.

On Sept. 7th Ed Conradi of Mt. Pleasant had a Wilson warbler, hooded and blackpoll warblers at his bird bath, and heard a whip-poor-will calling; on the same day Perry Nugent had a peregrine falcon zoom through his backyard and over the marsh.

Everyone who called was asked if they had water available for the birds. I was assured that everyone lived by a pond or had some other water source. Water is one of the best attractions for birds and can be even more important than food. Moving water works best and a mister or a water dripper placed over the bird bath is great (check with your local bird store). Of course, the latter part of September has provided plenty of water for everyone.

Speaking of birds in Dec.

1996 Carolina-birds came on line with a new Birdchat program to increase communication among birders in the Carolinas and provide a place for you to find out about and report rare birds, ask questions about bird identification, and share your observations of bird behavior. This is a very good program and if you are interested, please contact me for more information.

October is the month for CNHS's annual Bird Seed Sale. This year the new products available include net suet bells (which require no feeder), suet cakes and many types of seed. Please read the enclosed flyer for the details.

GOOD BIRDING, VAN

Contact me with your backyard sightings at 766-7000 or fax 556-1692 or e-mail vatkins@awod.com.

Urban birding takes a blow

By Bob Chinn

During the first part of the summer I noticed that the sewage settling ponds by my subdivision was getting low. Then I saw large equipment in the back. By the time I got back from vacation, the ponds were partially filled in. Last year, I led a field trip to the area to see how the wild birds were adapting to urban areas. According to the *Post and Courier*, they are going to fill these ponds and then sell the land as residential property.



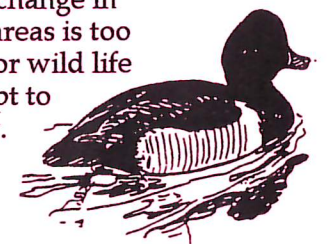
McALHANY WISH LIST:

Telescoping Pruning Saw
Trolling Motor & Battery
2 Recliners in good condition
Couch in good condition
Small Refrigerator
Blankets for double beds
Sheets for double beds
Pillows & Pillow Cases
Extension Ladder

IF YOU CAN DONATE ANY OF THESE ITEMS (OR CONTRIBUTE FUNDS TO BUY THEM), PLEASE CONTACT DON WATTS AT 797-6783

Over the years, I have observed thousands of birds in these settling ponds, including hundreds of egrets, and herons at one time, mostly little blue herons, snowy and great white egrets. I've also seen ruddy ducks, hood mergansers, buffleheads, lesser scaups, wood ducks, ring necked ducks, shovelers, blue-winged teals, green-wing teals, Bonaparte's gulls, ring billed gulls, herring gulls, forester's terns, least terns, bald eagles, ospreys, wood storks, white ibis, Canadian geese, snow geese, martins, swifts and various other birds. Unfortunately, the rate of change in urban areas is quite difficult for wild life to adapt to. Now all we can expect to see are new houses being built on the filled land.

Unfortunately, the rate of change in urban areas is too quick for wild life to adapt to quickly.



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