

The Lesser Squawk
Charleston Natural History Society
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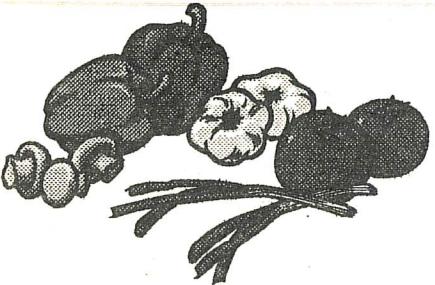
Newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society

affiliated with NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY 1970

April, 1998

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Vol. XLV, No. 4

National Wildlife Week is April 19th to 22nd



Charleston Natural History Society 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.

Courtenay Middle School Program

The Field Trip of Courtney Middle School Program is scheduled for April 24th from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Volunteers are needed to assist leading small groups of students to four city parks (Brittlebank, Waterfront, White Point Gardens and Hampton) to do some birding.

No Experience Necessary
we'll have a training session

Please call Sarah Brunson at 889-8198 if you can help at the Field Trip or at one of the two classroom sessions which are scheduled on April 15th and 22nd

Don't lose your access to healthy, organically grown food

GOOD NEWS: The USDA is recognizing consumer demand for organic food and are setting up "organic" standards.

BAD NEWS: The proposed "organic" standards will allow irradiated foods, genetically engineered foods, and foods grown on sewage sludge to be labeled as "organic."

SPEAK UP: The USDA's period for citizen input has been extended to April 30, 1998. The proposed rules can be downloaded from the Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/ams/nop> or contact the Federal Register at 202-512-1800 @ \$8 per copy (or request the 12/16/97 issue of the Federal Register at your library.) To submit your comments directly to the USDA write to Eileen Stommes, Deputy Administrator USDA-AMS-TM-NOP, Room 4007-S, AG Stop 0275, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456. Fax your comments to 202-690-4632 or send email to the Web address above. Support organic agriculture and help preserve our access to healthy, organically grown food.

National Audubon's S.C. Watchlist

American Black Duck
Swallow-tailed Kite
Yellow Rail
Black Rail
Willet
Long-billed Curlew
Red Knot
Short-bellied Dowitcher
Short-eared Owl
Chuck-will's-widow
Red-headed Woodpecker
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Wood Thrush
Golden-winged Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Swainson's Warbler
Kentucky Warbler
Painted Bunting
Dickcissel
Bachman's Sparrow
Henslow's Sparrow
Satlmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow

The Watchlist calls attention to birds at risk before they require federal listing, stressing preventative action. For more info, contact Vincent Muehler, NAS, 700 Broadway, NY, NY 10003; (212) 979-3150; vmuehler@audubon.org

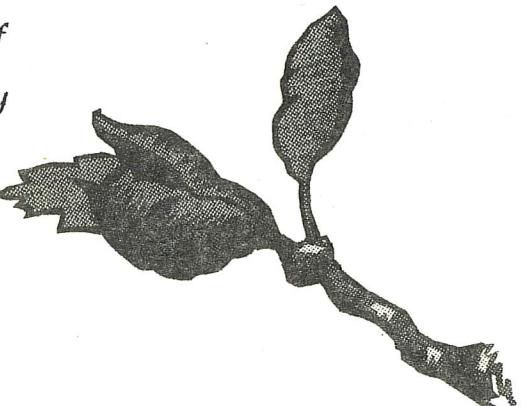
Explore the Native Flora of the Lowcountry with the Charleston Natural History Society in April:

CNHS APRIL PROGRAM
Tues., April 14th - 7:00 pm
CHARLESTON MUSEUM
Meeting & John Streets

John Brubaker of the S.C. Native Plant Society will familiarize us about the native flora of the Lowcountry. He will enlighten us as to how we can "turn back time" in our own back yards. He will tell us which plants should be growing there and which shouldn't. The goal is, of course, bio-diversity for all for all species. Come and learn which "Lowcountry" plants are actually native and which have been imported.

CNHS 1st APRIL OUTING
Sat., April 18th - 7:30 am
Bluff Plantation

Meet Dr. Julian Harrison and botanist Dr. Jean Everette (if available) for an enjoyable "Flora and Fauna" trip to Bluff Plantation. Meet at 7:30 at the Super K-mart parking lot on US Hwy. 52 between Northwoods Mall and Goose Creek. Bring your binoculars, field books, water, bug spray, etc. for a special morning visit to this historic plantation.



CNHS 2nd APRIL OUTING
Sat., April 25th - 7:30 am
Birding in Urban Areas

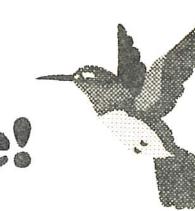
Join Bob Chinn for an interesting trip to check out which birds are utilizing various urban environments which we would not normally expect to find birds. It's a great chance to find out all Bob's secret birding spots. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the parking lot at Festival Centre at Dorchester and Ashley Phosphate Road on the east end near the bank. Bring the binoculars, bug spray, etc. It will be a wonderful chance to learn the location of urban birding areas that you can check out when you don't have time to go to McAlhany or Beidler. Bob is hoping to spot some painted buntings, indigo buntings, blue grosbeaks, sandpipers and more.

Spring is Here!

By Jane Lareau

I love the gentle transition from winter to spring. For those of us who revel in nature, there are so many signs that gladden the heart, like when the robins start singing and the cedar waxwings assemble in the tops of tall trees and make their almost inaudible whistles. When I jog around the neighborhood now I'm looking for those droppings that mean the green-back herons are nesting in the oaks. The yellow-crowned night herons are back in Washington Park. I haven't heard the chimney swifts circling the city yet (today is March 25) but that could just be because I sit in an office most days.

Last year around this time, a black and white warbler worked its way around every tree in my yard, singing his buzzy song. There was a cuckoo sitting quietly in the top branches, that I never would have seen if I hadn't been following the black and white. One day last spring a small bird hit my dining room window. I went out to see if it was okay, and there behind the azaleas was a stunned Swainson's warbler. I held it in my hand and felt its wildly racing heart. I cupped it in both hands and sat on my front porch until I couldn't feel its heart beat any more. I don't know what I thought I



Spring

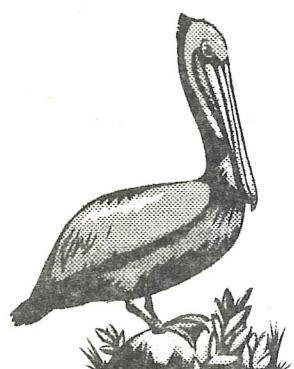
Bird Count

Sunday, April 26th

Meet at Gregory's Texaco at Hwy. 17N & Hwy. 41 at 6:30 a.m.

Anyone who can spot a bird is welcome – you don't have to be able to identify the bird – the more eyes the better!

Interested?
Call Ed Blitch
795-5277



Unusual Sightings

Sarah Taylor spotted a Swallow-tailed Kite West Ashley. A pair of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds has been hanging around East Wood Subdivision for the last six weeks. Bob Chinn was visited by Vesper Sparrows. Call Bob Chinn at 552-7884 to report unusual sightings.

April at McAlhany

Sunday, April 19th

7:00 a.m. to dusk

Join us at the McAlhany Sanctuary on Sunday, April 19th, for our monthly Open House. 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 County Road 26 and Hwy. 19 you'll cross Cattle Creek; the entrance to the Sanctuary is on the left side of the road about 8 miles from Grover.

Earth Day April 19th

Celebrate at Francis Beidler Forest

Community help is requested to pick up trash from Hwy 176 to the main gate. Anyone who participates for 2 hours (or more!) gets a free pass to come back another day and enjoy the Sanctuary again. Need further info? Call Beidler Forest at 803-462-2150.

1998 Nominating Committee:

Sharon Richardson, Norm Brunswig, Arch McCallum. Please contact them at phone numbers below if you would like to nominate someone or are interested in serving on the CNHS Board next year.

Backyard Birder

By Van Atkins

Spring is here at last and we finally have purple martins, several came to our houses and started checking them out. I have had several calls from birders having purple martins. Last night I noticed our Little Gem Magnolia Tree was full of cedar waxwings, they must have been roosting for the night. Yesterday we had four different woodpeckers in our yard: pileated; red-headed, red-bellied and downy. Not many purple or goldfinches left at our feeders. We still have a few chipping sparrows and dark-eyed juncos. The mockingbirds and cardinals are doing a lot of singing, sometimes all night for the mocker.

Bob Chinn called with a report of yellow chat, palm warbler and roughed-winged swallow goldfinches and cedar waxwings. Sarah Brunson has a great backyard, as she reported 2 osprey, 2 bald eagles and a Bonaparte's gull in her fish ponds.

Mary Myers had a Brewer's blackbird, yellow-bellied sapsucker, belted kingfisher, red-breasted Merganser plus about 25 other common feeder birds. Sharon Brown had her first N-Parula of the year and both yellow-throated and pine warblers are singing for her. Brother Hall from downtown is still getting a front row seat watching the peregrine falcon pick off pigeons and having dinner in front of him.

It is time to put up your hummingbird feeders, if you didn't leave them out all winter as I did. I have had several reports of early hummers in the area.

A few years ago Bruce Krucke had an article on how to get the mildew out of the feeders: Put about ten BBs and a couple of denture cleaning tablets with water in the feeder & agitate. Rinse well and refill. Remember that water is the most important thing you can have in your yard for attracting birds (I think Sarah knows this). And it is even better if it is moving or dripping. To keep the birds from getting sick it is a good idea to clean your seed feeders out with soap and water and rinse them well. Let me know if bird activity picks up around your feeders.

GOOD BIRDING! Watkins@awod.com; 766-700 or 556-1592 (fax)

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