

The Lesser Squawk
Charleston Natural History Society
P.O. Box 504
Charleston, SC 29402
(803) 577-7100



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.

January Meeting
Tues., Jan. 13th at 7:00 pm
Charleston Museum
360 Meeting Street

Come join us for a truly perfect cup of coffee -- one that actually helps songbirds. You've heard this story a lot. And it's one we hate telling. Coffee plantations in Central and South America are responsible for clear cutting rainforests and jungle to grow coffee as a cash crop. Coffee beans naturally grow in the shade of tropical trees, but plantation owners have learned how to grow it in full sun. Studies show that 90% fewer bird species are found in sun-grown coffee areas compared with the shade-grown coffee areas. The sun-grown coffee requires chemical input and year-round labor, placing financial demands on the growers to

clear cut more jungle and grow more coffee. Sun-grown coffee also leads to greater soil erosion and higher amounts of toxic runoff. But your coffee habit doesn't have to contribute to the destruction of natural habitat. Native shade trees, left to grow over the coffee plants protect them from rain and sun, help maintain soil quality, reduce the need for weeding and aid in natural pest control, thanks to the birds.

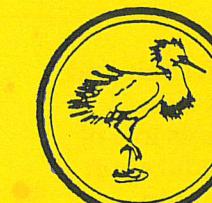
Our January program will be by Counter-Culture Coffee out of Durham, N.C. Fred Houck, one of the founders and owners of this shade-grown coffee company, will talk to us about this new line of coffee grown on organically certified plantations which are managed for birds, as well as coffee. Houck knows you can

change your morning coffee over to one that is shade-grown as the plantations are certified, based on individual inspections. Houck's slide show will describe the plantations which supplies his company's coffee and how they certify that they really are good for the birds. Please come, and bring a coffee-drinking friend. We'll sample some of Houck's coffees, too.

January Outing
Sat., Jan. 17th at 8:00 am
MEPKIN ABBEY

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Super K-Mart on Rivers Avenue in North Charleston for a visit to beautiful Mepkin Abbey. Bring your own food and drink, binoculars, cameras, etc. For more information call Bob Chinn at 552-7884.

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Newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society

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January 1998

153 Species Observed During Charleston Bird Count

By Bobbin Huff

Thirty-one birders braved a chilly morning which turned into a beautiful day to participate in the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count. The count area is a circle 15 miles in diameter with its center point between the two TV transmission towers on Sewee Road. Twelve parties, who covered different areas of the count circle, observed 153 species of birds, reports compiler Ed Blitch.

Highlighting the count were sightings of one peregrine falcon, 11 snow geese, four black-and-white warblers, one palm warbler, two orange-crowned

warblers, three house finches, every species of woodpecker occurring locally, except the hairy woodpecker, and every species of wren: Carolina, house, winter, sage and marsh.

Counters were: Matthew Blitch; Ed Blitch, III; Ed Blitch, IV; David Chamberlain; E. Calvin Clyde; Ed Conradi; Hal Curry; Suzi DeMerell; David Dommoyer; Sonny Hanckel; Doug Gayden; Bobbin Huff; David Huff; Jeremy James; Russ Johnson; Don Jones; Sandy Jones; Barbara Keefe; Kirstyn Leuner; Herbert "Mack" MacMurphy; Arch McCallum; David McLean;

David McLean, Sr.; Dean Murphy; Perry Nugent; Ann Shahid; Caroline Smythe; Tonya Spiers; Colleen Thompson; Murray Thompson; and Billy Want.

Following the count participants gathered to share their results at Christ Episcopal Church in Mt. Pleasant where they were treated to hot coffee and refreshments. Thanks to Maura Lake who organized the after count party.

The Charleston Count is one of five Christmas counts in driving distance of Charleston. The others are: McClellanville, Litchfield-Pawley's Island, ACE Basin, and Santee.

the Society by John D. Wannamaker who lived on the property until his death last year. The property is just outside of St. Matthews.

Mr. Wannamaker asked the Society to manage the property as a "nature and wildlife preserve and laboratory for research and education in wildlife management, agricultural and silvicultural practices, natural history and ecology." We are deeply indebted to him for considering us when he made this important decision.

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President's Column

By Jane Lareau

As you are reading this, you are contemplating a new year. As I am writing it, I am still in the old year and thinking about what we've done as the Charleston Natural History Society. We started in September with a new Board of Directors. Many of them had never been on the CNHS Board before. A few are old timers who have come back to provide the institutional memory.

Together we have undertaken a big task and we continue to need your help.

Perhaps the major change in this organization is the receipt of another piece of property. The Society already owns and manages the McAlhany Property on the Edisto River in Dorchester County. Many of you know this property and have spent wonderful times enjoying a gift that showed the generosity and kindness of Mrs. Cleo McAlhany.

This past year the Society received another gift of land in Calhoun County, and funds to manage the property. It was donated to

President's Column
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But managing land property for wildlife isn't easy. We have inherited an earth that has been used pretty hard. Very few sections of it remain in "native" or "natural" condition. Indeed, one could argue for hours about what those two words mean. Unless you are something on the order of a conservation biologist, the best use of the land it will not be immediately apparent. There are a few obvious starting places: we want it to be host to the greatest amount of biodiversity that can occur on that site naturally; we want to avoid using chemicals or otherwise disrupting natural processes. We want members and others to enjoy the property without adversely impacting wild things that live there. We don't want liability problems. We want harmonious relationships with people who live nearby, and so on.

This is an enormous charge. Fortunately, it just so happens we have just the right Board of Directors to help us work out a wise management plan. We have our own conservation biologist (Arch McCallum). We have Norm Brunswig who has managed Audubon's Four Hole Swamp Sanctuary

for more than 20 years. We have Sarah Brunson who has a degree in wildlife biology. We have Sharon Richardson who is Director of Land Protection for the Lowcountry Open Land Trust. We have Jeff Dennis who oversees property of his own and is an avid sportsman. We have Julian Harrison who is a herpetologist. We have Cornelia Gibbs to crack the whip on finances. And, we have generous talent in the form of Jeremy James, Karen Beshears, Maura Lake and Robert Donato.

In addition to the land, we want to continue a tradition of outings which introduce people to birdwatching and the Lowcountry outdoors. We want to raise money for Society activities (like paying for this newsletter and contributing to local conservation causes). And we want to make sure that you, our members, are getting something positive in return for being a member of the Charleston Natural History Society. We're going to need a lot of help in 1998. If you'd like to volunteer for one of our committees, please call any of the Board members listed here. We need someone to help us find interesting programs each month. We

need a conservation chair and someone to help us with publicity. Sarah wants lots of volunteers for our education program and Bob Chinn could use help lining up and leading field trips. We need someone to help us do fundraising.

I hope one of your New Year's resolutions will be to become more active with the Charleston Natural History Society and help us with the work we have to do.

Wanna burn the woods?

We need you to help the U.S. Forest Service do just that ... safely. Prescribed burning is one of the most important forest management techniques to restore the native longleaf pine forest, which has been lost from most of the Southeast. Foresters in the Francis Marion National Forest need help when they conduct prescribed burns. If you are interested in helping with this critical land management tool, please call Jane Lareau at 723-8035 and let her know. The foresters will be giving lessons and you could be certified and called on to help in special circumstances.

OFFICERS:	
PRESIDENT: Jane Lareau	795-2150
VICE PRESIDENT: Sharon Richardson	577-6510
SECRETARY: Maura Lake	889-3415
TREASURER: Cornelia Carrier Gibbs	556-7806

BOARD MEMBERS:	
Karen Beshears	884-7539
Sarah Brunson	889-8198
Norm Brunswig	462-2150
Jeff Dennis	577-8890
Robert Donato	849-7139
Julian Harrison	795-1694
Jeremy James	886-5254
Arch McCallum	883-9818

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Send submissions to:
Maura Lake, EDITOR
P.O. Box 504
Charleston, SC 29402
or call 889-3415 or fax 723-6243

Backyard Birder

By Van Atkins

Here we are back from a great trip to the San Francisco Bay area and on up to Washington state. We were gone all of November and most of December and saw a lot of new birds and even visited with family some.

Here at home we have some backyard birds, but not a large variety. Our list includes White Breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse, Downey and Red Bellied Woodpeckers, House Finch, Carolina and House Wrens, Chipping and White Throated Sparrows, Yellow Rumped Warbler, Carolina Chickadee and, of course, the Sharp Shinned Hawk.

Scott Hall of Beaufain Street called and reported a Peregrine Falcon devouring a Pigeon outside his window.

Sharon Brown reported that last month she had a flock of American Goldfinches come to her feeders, so she went to town and bought thistle seed. When she arrived home they were gone and have not been back. I haven't seen any at my feeders yet. Ben Smith says things have been slow at his place also.

With cold weather coming up north the birds should be here soon, I hope. Try using different types of feeders to see which ones attract the birds you want. Make sure you have plenty of clean waster available in different locations.

Happy birding and
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
*Call Van Atkins with your
backyard sightings at 766-7000
or fax to 556-1592 or e-mail him
at vatkina@awod.com.*

NATIONAL AUDUBON BOARD ELECTION IS UNDERWAY IN OUR REGION

Nominations are now open for the chapter-nominated candidate from our Region to a 3-year term on the National Audubon Society Board of Directors. Any chapter in our region may nominate one candidate for the Board by February 28th.

Nominees should be willing and able to:
*Help set overall National Audubon policies and budget.
Articulate the issues and concerns of our region.
Communicate Board matters with all chapters in our region.
Participate in fundraising, and maintain the fiscal integrity of NAS.*

*Fill the position for the next 3 years beginning Dec., 1998.
Attend 4 Board meetings per year, each 3-4 days in length. Travel expenses can be reimbursed.
Contact a chapter officer if you are qualified, interested or want to suggest another chapter member.*



Unusual Sightings

By Bob Chinn

Mike Aldenderfer spotted Tundra Swans at the Grove Plantation Nov. 11th and 12th.

Sue Lawley of Whitehouse Plantation saw a Bald Eagle on her dock on Nov. 15th.

Sarah Brunson observed a group of Snow Geese on Toogoodoo Road during the week of Dec. 15th.

A winter wren was seen at Magnolia Plantation on Dec. 17th.

Call Bob Chinn with your Unusual Sightings at 552-7884

Oyster Roast a Success

By Bobbin Huff
Oyster Roast Committee Chairperson

The Charleston Natural History Society's Oyster Roast at Goldbug Island was a great success. Ninety-four members, guests and friends attended to enjoy the oysters, hot dogs and fixin's, and Bob Chinn's great chili. Side dishes included Maura Lake's delicious potato salad and Sharon Richardson's wonderful brownies.

Special thanks go out to Julian Harrison and Dennis and Donna Forsythe who provided hot dogs; Bob Chinn who brought beer, soft drinks and chili; to Jeff Dennis who provided chips and munchies; to Jane Lareau and Maura Lake who helped work the ticket table; and Jeremy James, Karen Beshears and Jane Lareau for providing door prizes. Jeremy also deserves commendation as the MC during the evening.

Businesses which provided door prizes include the following: Audubon Shop; Worthwhile; Birds 'n Ivy (all on King Street in Charleston) and Wonder Works in Mt. Pleasant.

Thanks for your help in making this event a success. Hope to see everyone again next year!

McAlhany Open House
Sunday, Jan. 18th
Call Don Watts at 797-6783
for directions and/or information