

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

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Charleston, SC  
Permit No. 349



FOUNDED 1905

Vol. XLV, No. 3

# The Lesser Squawk

Newsletter of the Charleston Natural History Society

affiliated with NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY 1970

March 1998

## Birds of prey, birds of splendor

**CNHS MARCH PROGRAM**  
Tues., March 10th - 7:00 pm  
CHARLESTON MUSEUM  
Meeting & John Streets

Nestled deep in the Francis Marion National Forest is a special hospital that treats wounded birds of prey: hawks, owls, eagles, kites, vultures and more. The S.C. Center for Birds of Prey is one of the Charleston Natural History Society's special projects. We support the Center financially, but also with volunteers who help in the annual Coastal Hawk Migration Survey which the Center coordinates. Jim Elliot, director, is also furthering important research on Swallow-tailed kite nesting populations in the Francis Marion. Jim will talk about this important work, and how we can help count migrating raptors, prevent birds injuries and otherwise support conservation of these magnificent birds. We'll have shade-grown coffee for sale, warbler and CNHS T-shirts and Jim will probably bring some of his "patients." Look to see you there!



## Bird Walk on the Boardwalk

**CNHS MARCH OUTING**  
Sat., March 23rd - 6:00 pm  
FRANCIS BEIDLER FOREST  
Harleyville, SC

Join us for a truly special evening walk on the Boardwalk at the Francis Beidler National Forest. Our walk begins at 6:00 p.m. so we will have plenty of time to see day birds going to roost and continue through dusk and darkness as we watch for owls and other night birds. Great change of pace from morning bird walks.

The Sanctuary is located at the Ridgeville exit of I-26; watch for the signs and you can't miss it.

## Spring Bird Count, Ted Turner Style

By Bobbin Huff

Sometimes what starts out to be a routine day turns out differently. That's what happened to us on the ACE Spring Bird Count. Five of us were assigned to Ted Turner's Plantation, Hope, south of Jacksonboro, which Turner graciously opened for the count.

The first unusual sight was a deer that just stood and looked at us as we drove toward the house, as we looked closer we noticed not one, but 25 unusually tame deer.

As we parked, a barking Labrador retriever ran up. David reached down to pet him when up bounded a cougar. He quickly pulled his hand back in! The young cat, who was restrained by a chain, played with his toys. I noticed the dog carefully stayed outside the cougar's reach.

The next surprise: a group of buffaloes in a fence; and, in the distance, Turner's black bear in a cage. I also saw my first wild turkeys which I had somehow missed viewing since I moved to the Lowcountry 28 years ago. They had abandoned their usual skittishness and groups of them paraded, usually in a line formation, presumably looking for their next meal. On a pond, a flock of Canada geese noisily swam and searched for food.

On the count, we saw thousands of ducks, egrets, herons and other waterfowl. Following the sound of birds flying in to land, we were rewarded at the sight of 47 graceful tundra swans. Later, we saw a northern oriole.

Six parties of counters covered the ACE Basin that day, observing a total of 135 species; 14,247 individuals, according to compiler, David Chamberlain. In all, 29 bald eagles were seen. Chamberlain noted that the numbers of sparrows and waterfowl were down. All shared a cool, sunny day which was perfect for observing native, as well as exotic species.

### 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.*

## Breakfast at McAlhany

By Bobbin Huff

Twenty-two members and guests accepted Don Watts' invitation to breakfast at the McAlhany Nature Preserve on Sunday, Feb. 21. They were served a wonderful meal of eggs, bacon, grits, biscuits and coffee. After breakfast everyone enjoyed the sunny spring day by taking walks along the trails, paddling canoes on the lake, and exploring nearby fields. The water was very high, but trails were mostly dry. We saw many red-headed woodpeckers and wood ducks. Several members of the nearby community, who help watch over the property, attended. There were several requests for an encore, which has been granted. Another breakfast will be held on March 21.

While we were driving back, David and I were treated to a close-up look at a red fox as it crossed the road only a few yards in front of us.

### JOIN THE CHARLESTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*If you join the National Audubon Society for \$20 per year you will automatically become a member of CNHS.*

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

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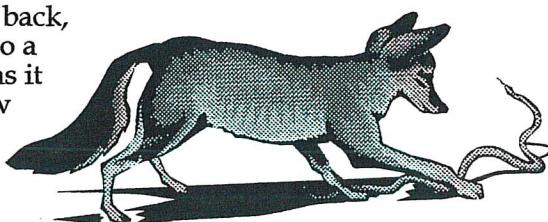
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Mail to National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 51003, Boulder, CO 80323-1003  
Please make checks payable to NAS  
CHAPTER CODE U-51

## Breakfast, Birding & Beautification Day at McAlhany

SATURDAY, MARCH 21ST  
McALHANY SANCTUARY

If you missed the first Breakfast at McAlhany, you have another chance to join us on Saturday, March 21st at 8:00 a.m. After another generous breakfast of eggs, bacon, grits, biscuits and shade-grown coffee, we'll help earn our keep by picking up trash. Somehow the high water seems to bring in trash from everywhere. So bring your gloves, plastic garbage bags and hearty appetites. Of course, you'll still have plenty of time to enjoy the beauty of this nature preserve in the early spring. Hope to see you there.



## A Road to Ruin

By Jane Lareau

Perhaps you have been following the issue of I-73, a new interstate proposed to run through some of the wildest and most pristine parts of South Carolina. If you wanted to point a finger at what causes loss of bird habitat and the resultant decline in bird species, you'd be hard pressed to find something worse than an interstate. This is not only because of the direct impact of the asphalt scar, but because of the random, ugly and extensive development that these mega-roads tend to spawn. (South of the Border springs to mind.)

I-73 is an example of how we used to do things in this state, when a few powerful people made decisions without bothering to consult with the people. I thought that time had passed, but I find that there are those who are still willing to make this decision for us, in the absence of significant public outcry. That's why it is time for you to speak up now.

Cont'd on page 2

# Backyard Birder

by Van Atkins

Things are starting to pick up in the Lowcountry; I have had several calls of birds at feeders. Make sure your Purple Martin houses are clean and ready for use. Don Watts sent an e-mail saying he saw two Purple Martins on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>. Ben Smith was blessed with White Throated Sparrows, American Goldfinches and a Black Vulture, which flew over for a new yard bird. Bruce Krucke has had over 100 Goldfinches lately; she used 50 pounds of sunflower seed in ten days. She has around 35 Chipping Sparrows, a Junco and a few White Throats.

Judy Hemphill has had Cedar Waxwings in her yard. I have had a few Goldfinches, but nothing like in years past. For the past two weeks I have been blessed with Purple Finches at my feeders as well as a lot of Juncos on the ground.

Got word that new birder had an Ivory Billed Woodpecker in his yard. I won't give his address, as I'm sure he would not like 350,000 birders in his yard in the next few days.



Scott Hall saw a Merlin making short work of a Mourning Dove in downtown Charleston. (Nature at its best.) He has had a Merlin come to the yard each year since 1981. They usually show up in December or January.

Mary Pringle faxed the news that she had a female Purple Martin on the 19<sup>th</sup>, followed by 2 more the next day. She lives on the Isle of Palms.

All that went on the Marrington Plantation trip had a great time. We saw several Warblers and different Ducks. I was unable to make the Bull Island trip, but I'm sure they had a swell time over there. It was great having three different trips in January (and again here in March) for us to choose from.

Call me with your reports – it may be common in your yard, but not in others.

*GOOD BIRDING!*

Vatkins@awod.com; 766-700 or 556-1592 (fax)

## *In search of a speaker...*

We've been getting some calls lately for people who want a speaker come talk to their group about birds, backyard birding, planting for birds, etc. I know people who are great at recognizing birds. I know people who know about bird food. And I know people who know about native plants. But I don't think I know anyone who is an expert on all three. If you are out there and could give such a talk, if you'll identify yourself to me (with credentials) I'll gladly recommend you as a speaker.



## A ROAD TO RUIN

Cont'd from page 1

In case you haven't been following this issue, I-73 was actually the idea of Senator Robert Byrd, who wanted a(nother) interstate through West Virginia (which has more interstate miles per capita than any other state in the nation.) So he made up I-73 and proclaimed that it would run from Detroit to Charleston despite the fact that one already does. The route is supposed to enter the state around Cheraw and head to Charleston. The SC Department of Transportation gets to the pick the route. Right now, their chosen route would cost taxpayers \$5.5 billion for a road that won't solve the first traffic problem. It would plow through the new Waccamaw River National Wildlife Refuge, sideswipe Sandy Island and Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, and go through the Francis Marion National Forest, historic homes, plantations, churches, thousands of acres of wetlands and more. Not one study has been conducted to determine if this road would solve *even one* transportation need.

Proponents of this road claim it is desperately needed for economic development, despite the fact that research shows interstates can hurt small communities by siphoning business traffic away from them. The oft-repeated claim that an interstate through the Pee Dee will bring economic vitality ignores the facts that I-95 didn't bring vitality to Manning, St. George or Ridgeland, nor I-26 to Harleyville, Ridgeville or Jedberg. If interstates

bring economic growth, what happened to these towns? Clearly there are other factors that go into economic growth (like good schools) but there are those who are mindlessly declaring that I-73 is vital for economic growth and apparently, no other issue matters to them.

Any money for construction of I-73 will compete directly with highway projects that are desperately needed, such as repairs to existing roads and replacement of aging bridges. If you are sick and tired of your tax dollars being spent on things you don't want or need, that also do terrible damage to the environment, it is time to say your piece. Write the following people and let them know how you feel:

Sen. Strom Thurmond  
217 Russell Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-5972

Sen. Ernest F. Hollings  
125 Russell Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-6121

Rep. Mark Sanford  
1223 Longworth HOB,  
Washington, DC 20515 (202)  
225-3176

**SC DOT Officials**  
Ms. Elizabeth Mabry  
Executive Director  
SC Dept. of Transportation  
P.O. Box 191  
Columbia, SC 29202  
(803) 737-1302

Buck Limehouse, Chairman  
S.C. Highway Commission  
8 Cumberland Street  
Chas., SC 29401  
(803) 577-6242

Robert Probst  
Federal Highway Administration  
1835 Assembly Street, Suite 758  
Columbia, SC 29201

## *Cypress Gardens*

**CNHS MARCH OUTING**  
**Sat., March 14th; 9:00 am**  
**CYPRESS GARDENS HWY. 52**  
**(Between Moncks Corner & Goose Creek)**  
**\$4.00/person**

What a way to begin the Spring birding season! Spend the day exploring beautiful Cypress Gardens. The special discount rate (\$4.00) includes the butterfly house and aquarium. Bring your lunch, your camera, your binoculars, your children, your walking shoes (but NO PETS). If you need more information, please call Bob Chinn at 552-7884.

## *Unusual Sightings*

Bruce Krucke spotted Woodstorks on Hwy. 174 in Jan.; Marilyn Lecuhua saw them 2/10; Shirley Pattiolo sighted them in the Wallace Creek area; Bob Chinn observed a Sandhill Crane fly by his house; and Don Watts noticed 6 Sandhill Cranes off the Mark Clark.

Call Bob Chinn with unusual observations at 552-7884.

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*The Lesser Squawk*, newsletter of CNHS is published monthly except for the months of June, July and August. Deadline for copy is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Send submissions to:  
Maura Lake, EDITOR  
4814 Coastline Road  
Meggett, SC 29449  
or call 889-3415