

The Lesser Squawk
The Charleston Natural History Society
PO Box 504
Charleston, SC 29402

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Charleston, SC
Permit No. 349



THE LESSER SQUAWK

Newsletter of the *Charleston Natural History Society*/local chapter of *The National Audubon Society*

Founded 1905

NAS Affiliation 1970

Volume XLVIV No. 5

December 2002, January, February 2003

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.



McAlhany Open Houses Jan. 5 & Feb. 2

Don't let the cold weather keep you from attending our winter open houses at the McAlhany Nature Preserve. There'll be open houses on **Jan. 5** and **Feb. 2**. The gates to the preserve are open from 9:30 am.

Directions: Take Hwy. 61 to Cannadys Cross-

roads and turn right onto Hwy. 15. When you reach the small community of Grover, take the first left onto Wire Rd. Go over 1-95 and across a small creek. Look for our sign on the left side of the road. Questions? Call Jeff Dennis at 577-8890.

BOARD MEMBERS

Bob Chinn, president, 552-7884
Cornelia Carrier, v-p, newsletter 577-6437
Thomas Snowden, treasurer, 875-3445
Julian Harrison, historian, outings 795-1694
Ann Tiller, membership, 884-4532
Steve Bleezarde, webmaster, 406-2061
Joe Cockrell, birdseed sale, 762-3868
Morgan McClure, programs, 763-0222
Jeff Dennis, McAlhany, 577-8890
Norm Brunswig, State Office, (843)688-5833
Garrett Budds, conservation, 571-4668
Doreen Cubie, (843)928-3702
Melissa Davis, 216-3833
Polly Holden, 853-1100

Recruit New Members!

CNHS / National Audubon Society membership
(First Time Members)

Regular- \$20 Sr. Citizens/Students - \$15

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to this **coupon** and check to:

Charleston Natural History Society
PO Box 504
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Make checks payable to **National Audubon Society**
Write Chapter Code U-51 on your check.

7XCH

Winter Outings Offer Wide Variety

Note: Please register for outings by the Friday before the event by calling Bob Chinn (552-7884) or Julian Harrison (795-1694). There are no outings in December but there are Christmas Bird Counts. See story inside.

January Outings

Caw Caw Interpretive Center

Sunday, Jan. 12, A return trip to the Caw Caw Interpretive Center in Ravenel, SC, a 654-acre site that was once part of a 5500-acre rice plantation. The Center's impoundments provide feeding grounds for several species of ducks (e.g. green-winged teal, lesser scaup, and northern pintails), shorebirds such as greater and lesser yellowlegs and dunlins, and various raptors including American eagles, and sharp-tailed, red-shouldered, and red-tailed hawks. Seven miles of interpretive trails wind through various habitats including bottomland hardwood, upland and maritime forest, cypress and maple swamps, ricefields and ricefield dikes, and tidal marsh. Other birds that have been seen in recent weeks include hairy woodpeckers, golden-crowned kinglets, palm warblers, and vesper sparrows.

Our leader at the Center will be CNHS board member Garrett Budds who is an Operations Aide and Environmental Interpreter at the site. Meet Julian Harrison at the West Ashley Walmart at **8:15 am** in the corner of the parking lot opposite St. Francis Hospital where we will carpool and drive to the Center. This is a half-day trip; bring snacks, water, field guides and binoculars. There is a \$4 fee for adults, \$2 for seniors (60+) and children (3-12).

Santee National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday Jan. 25. Last year's outing to Santee National Wildlife Refuge at Lake Marion was so successful (sandhill cranes and Ross' geese were seen at the refuge's Bluff Unit) that CNHS will return there this year to explore this unit's trails and boardwalk through or near mixed hardwoods, fields, wetlands and impoundments. If time permits, we can also explore an area of the refuge that CNHS has not previously visited, the auto tour route in Cuddo Unit further east on Lake Marion. Cuddo features diverse habitats including several impoundments, fields, and wooded areas.

Meet field trip leader and Society President Bob Chinn at

7:30 am at the Walmart in Summerville. He'll be in the corner of the lot closest to the first entrance off Hwy 17A from I26 (Exit 199). Bring lunches, water, field guides, binoculars, and a telescope if you have one. Warm/protective clothing would be a good idea as the day could be windy and cold.

February Outings

Donnelly Wildlife Management Area

Saturday, Feb. 8, Board member and wetland ecologist Morgan McClure will lead a trip to the Donnelly Wildlife Management Area in eastern Colleton County near Green Pond, SC. Donnelly is part of the ACE Basin and its 8,048 acres encompass managed ricefields, forested wetlands, tidal marsh, fields, and several types of upland forests including a natural stand of longleaf pine. There are two designated nature trails and miles of dirt roads for hikers. During late winter and early spring many species of waterfowl and migratory songbirds can be seen in the area. If time permits we can also visit nearby Bear Island Wildlife Management Area, which has had a large flock of white pelicans in recent months.

Meet Morgan at **7:30 am** in the Food Lion parking lot in Ravenel, SC (near intersection of Hwys 17S and 165). Bring lunch, water, field guides, binoculars and telescopes if you have them.

Mansfield Plantation

Sunday, Feb. 23, Burton Moore will lead a trip to the grounds of Mansfield Plantation, Georgetown Co., SC. This 900-acre plantation on the Black River has 300 acres of old ricefields and miles of dirt roads and trails through diverse habitats including wooded areas, ponds, and marsh. We thank owner Sally Smith Cahalan for providing us with the opportunity to visit this historic site.

Meet Burton at **7:15 am** at Lowe's in Mt Pleasant in the corner of the parking lot nearest the IHOP restaurant. Please be on time as the plantation is just north of Georgetown and we are expected there around 8:30-8:45 am. Bring lunches, water, field guides, binoculars/telescopes, and plan to be in the field about three hours; we'll return to Charleston after our lunch on the grounds. Note: this outing does not include a tour of the house.

Get Involved in the 103rd Christmas Bird Count: Help out in Any or All Area Counts

Lowcountry birders will take to woods, waters, marshes and islands this month and early Jan. for the National Audubon Society's 103rd Christmas Bird Count. Groups will cover a circle 15 miles in diameter (approximately 177 square miles) that includes many different habitats. Counters will record every species they see, usually about 150 in coastal areas. Christmas counts show which species are increasing or decreasing and whether winter ranges are changing.

The counts also are fun and offer a learning experience and a chance to view birds in beautiful habitats. All are welcome to participate on any Christmas Bird Count, from beginning birder to seasoned ornithologist.

Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch and beverage, layers of clothing and good walking shoes for a day in the field.

There is a \$5.00 fee for participants age 19 and older. This fee helps offset the cost of publishing the count results of 1800 counts during the season that begins Friday and will end Jan. 5. This year each participant paying the \$5.00 fee will receive the CBC issue of American Birds.

Count Birds in Your Backyard and Help Scientists Track Them

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be Feb 14-17. Hosted by National Audubon and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the GBBC is a "snapshot" of late winter bird populations. Everyone's contribution is important and your bird list can help answer questions about the health of our bird populations.

How to participate: Count the birds in your backyard, local park, or other natural area on any or all of the four count days. For each species that you see, record the highest number of individuals that you observe at any one time. Don't add a bird every time you see one at your feeder: you could be counting the same individual.

Enter your count on-line at the GBBC site (<http://www.birdsource.org>), using your state checklist to submit your highest counts for that day. View your results. After you have entered your count for the day, visit the Maproom to see results from around the continent. If you do not have access to the internet, record your count and have a friend/relative enter your results or use a local library. For more info visit www.birdsource.org.

(this applies to all counts!)

The Charleston area count will be on Sunday, Jan 5. Meet Bob Chinn by the KFC at the US 17N & SC Hwy 41 intersection (north of Mt. Pleasant) at 6:45 am for assignment to a field party. The Charleston circle covers part of the National Forest, Capers Island, along Hwy 41, Moore's landing, Wando River area and I'on Swamp.

For info or if you have questions, call Bob Chinn, 552-7884 or email rchinn@awod.com

Other counts in our area and contacts:

McClellanville—Saturday, Dec. 14. Perry Nugent, 556-3841

Congaree—Sunday, Dec. 15. Julian Harrison, 795-1694

Santee NWR—Saturday, Dec 28. Lex Glover, 803-438-9855 or email blgvr@emson.edu

ACE Basin—Sunday, Dec. 29. David Chamberlain, 884-0019.

Litchfield/Pawleys Island —Monday, Dec. 30. Jack Peachey, 843-347-5810 or email ppaw@sccoast.net.

Birdseed Sale Was Fundraising Success

During our Annual Wild Bird Feed Sale this fall, CNHS sold 3,527 pounds of seed, and made a profit of \$1,244 which will be used to support our programs, maintenance of McAlhaney Nature Preserve, and grants to important local environmental causes. Thanks to Joe Cockrell and others who conducted the sale and to everyone who purchased seed. Special thank-you's go to Abide-A-While Nursery & Garden Center in Mt. Pleasant and Sofa SuperStore in West Ashley for graciously providing their facilities. If you shop at these businesses please express our appreciation for their help.

VISIT OUR WEBPAGE
www.homestead.com/
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contact Webmaster
Bob Chinn
843-552-7884
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Meetings on Light Pollution, Birds

January

Twenty years ago Charlestonians could clearly see the milky way from the downtown area on any clear night. Now it is a rare few times a year or less that a faint glimpse can be seen, yet there are communities more densely populated than Charleston with a clear view of the night sky because of sensible light pollution laws.

Terry Richardson, senior instructor of physics and astronomy at the College of Charleston, will give a power point presentation about **light pollution** at the **January 14** meeting. It is an especially timely issue, given the proposals for lighting the new bridge.

Easy Way to Make Your Voice Heard on Issues

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The South Carolina Conservation Land Bank. Two examples of the influence conservationists hold with their elected officials. Two victories exemplifying what we can do when we act together on matters that are dear to us.

Any successful conservation program needs the involvement of people like our members and other activists. Any successful conservation program in today's world also needs to embrace the ever growing electronic medium of communication. Audubon South Carolina announces the creation of its electronic advocacy network, ACTION SOUTH CAROLINA!

The electronic advocacy network will greatly improve the efficiency of alerting our members and other interested individuals of important conservation matters in South Carolina. Often critical legislation requires fast and positive action on the part of concerned citizens. A letter sent by mail often is simply too slow! A phone call to every member in our state is often too costly! The use of e-mail to notify interested parties of the need for their involvement is much more efficient and cuts out the need to waste large amounts of paper!

If you are interested in having your name placed in our Electronic Advocacy Network, please send an e-mail to scaction@audubon.org. When the need arises for action on the part of our members a notice will be sent to participants with proposed steps for you to take. Get involved and make a difference! If you have any questions please feel free to contact April Stallings at (843) 462-2150 or astallings@audubon.org.

There is also talk (at publication time) of the introduction of a city ordinance to control light pollution.

February

Chris Wood, from Wild Birds Unlimited, will give a presentation on **creating and maintaining wildlife habitats in our yards** at our meeting **February 11**.

Chris has been through the Habitat Stewards Program of the National Wildlife Federation, which provides training for individuals who, in turn, teach community workshops about how to create Backyard Wildlife Habitats. His presentation, using many beautiful slides, will show how to provide the four essential elements - food, water, shelter and places to raise young - to make our yards attractive to wildlife.

Chris will also take us, step-by-step, through the process to follow to certify our yards as Backyard Wildlife Habitats. More than 27,000 people nationwide have followed this program and received certification from the National Wildlife Federation.

Raffle

Chris has graciously donated a fantastic Bird feeding station with room for multiple feeders, suet and Equipped with squirrel baffle. Tickets will be sold at January and February meetings. Meetings in the Charleston Museum begin with a reception at 6:30 pm followed by the program at 7 pm.

Experience Nightwalks At Beidler Forest

On selected Saturdays the next three months, there'll be nightwalks at Beidler Forest. Learn about the nocturnal life of the swamp bathed in the light of the moon. Staff guides will answer all your questions.

Walks start at 5 pm Jan. 11 and 18; at 5:30 pm, Feb. 8 and 15 and at 6 p.m. March 8 and 15. Reservations are required and groups are limited to not more than 25. Cost is \$7 per person. This walk is not recommended for children under 10 years of age. Please call 843-462-2150 to reserve your spot today.

Rummage Sale Planned

If you have clothes, furniture, tools, appliances or other items that you no longer need, save them for CNHS's spring rummage sale. We hope this will be our best fundraiser of the year, but we need your help to make it a success. More in spring newsletter.