

THE Lesser SQUAWK

The Charleston Audubon Society
P.O. Box 504
Charleston, SC 29402

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The Charleston Natural History Society – a SC chapter (chartered in 1970) of the National Audubon Society, serving Berkeley, Charleston & Dorchester counties – is a nonprofit environmental organization that actively promotes awareness, appreciation and conservation of the natural environment through educational programs, field trips, conservation projects, sponsored research and social activities.

Birding a Popular Pastime All Across the Country

A new federal economic report found that 46 million birdwatchers across America spent \$32 billion in 2001 pursuing one of the Nation's most popular outdoor activities.

The report, *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis*, is the first of its kind analyzing data from the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Montana, Vermont and Wisconsin led the Nation in birding participation rates. California, New York and Pennsylvania had the most birders overall.

"Nearly one in five Americans is a bird watcher," said Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams. "This report recognizes what we always thought to be true. Birdwatching is very popular and contributes greatly to our economy, so it is important that we continue to work with our partners to restore and protect habitat to ensure healthy bird populations."

Birders spent \$32 billion on gear such as binoculars, travel, food and big ticket items such as canoes, cabins and off-road vehicles. This spending generated \$85 billion in overall economic output and \$13 billion in federal and state income taxes, and supported more than 863,000 jobs.

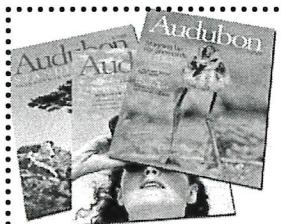
The full report is available on-line at http://library.fws.gov/nat_survey2001_birding.pdf.

Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness

Join the local Sierra Club and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance at 7 p.m. on Thursday, November 6, 2003 at Baruch Auditorium on the MUSC campus. This presentation is open to all and free of charge.

This is a multi-media slideshow documenting citizen efforts to designate some public lands as wilderness in southern Utah's canyons and deserts.

There will also be a 20 minute presentation on the status of the Utah wilderness movement. The show encourages viewers to participate in the movement to protect these unique lands, but is also a must see anyone wishing to become involved in public lands conservation efforts.



New Members, Renewals, Gift Memberships

For only \$20* you get one-year subscriptions to *Audubon* magazine and *The Lesser Squawk*, and all the benefits of local and National Audubon Society membership. Renew for just \$35/year. *\$15 for Sr. Citizens and Students

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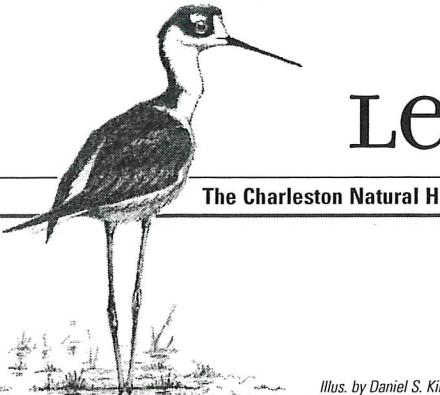
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MAIL THIS COUPON AND YOUR CHECK TO:
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P.O. BOX 504
CHARLESTON, SC 29402

[RENEWALS MUST INCLUDE THE 20-DIGIT MEMBER NUMBER FROM YOUR AUDUBON ADDRESS LABEL]

Checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Include chapter code on check: U-51 7XCH

Charleston Audubon Society



The Charleston Natural History Society, est. 1905

THE Lesser SQUAWK

November 2003 • Vol. L • No. 3

November Kicks-Off With Rummage Drop-Off and Sale

What Have You Found to Donate?

There's still time to clean out your closets and garages for items you can donate to our annual (2nd year) rummage sale from 7 a.m. until noon on Saturday, November 8. We'll be accepting items at the Masonic Center, 1285 Orange Grove Road in West Ashley, on Friday, November 7, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

If you have items too large to get into your car, call Cornelia Carrier before Friday at 577-6437, and we'll schedule one of our volunteers with a truck to pick-up those items.

Some things to remember: Please try to price all your items – and price things low so they'll move. If you have clothes please put them on hangers. If you don't have items, think about cooking something to sell – cakes, cookies, jams, pickles, or vegetables, or you can donate any never-opened packaged food. Maybe your neighbors have something they'd like to contribute to a good cause?

Special thanks go to the folks at EZ Mobile Storage, 1012 St. Andrews Blvd., Suite D (Tel. 552-3339), who are providing portable storage units on site to secure items overnight and before they are put on display.

If you can't contribute items, please participate by buying some of the merchandise we will have for sale. We'll have a treasure trove of clothes (designer labels too!), antique glassware and linens, furniture, tools, electronics, appliances, knick-knacks, dishes, books, kitchen stuff, food and more.

We are also asking for volunteers to help with set-up on Friday and to work the sale on Saturday. To volunteer or ask questions, call Cornelia.

President's Message: Cookout at McAlhany Preserve

More than 900 members belong to the Charleston Audubon/Natural History Society and most of you have never been to the McAlhany Nature Preserve.

The preserve is located in upper Dorchester County on the Edisto River. On the first Sunday of each month we usually hold an Open House for members and the public. On December 7, 2003, from noon till 5:00 p.m. we're inviting you to join your fellow members for a cookout.

We will be grilling hot dogs and hamburgers. Please bring a covered dish and come out to enjoy the day. You may explore the riverbank and bottomland hardwood forests. See what plants and animals you can find along the freshwater creek or you may want to just sit by the fire in the cabin. There will be plenty to do for the whole family, so plan on coming out!

Directions: Take Hwy 61, Hwy 78 or I-26 to Hwy 15. Go to the small town of Grover which is about 10 miles south of St. George. Turn west on Wire Rd., cross over I-95 and continue for several miles and you will see our signs on the left.

Please let me know by December 4 if you plan to attend. Looking forward to a good afternoon and a great turnout.

Tom Snowden PH: 843.875.3445
EMAIL: toms@myexcel.com

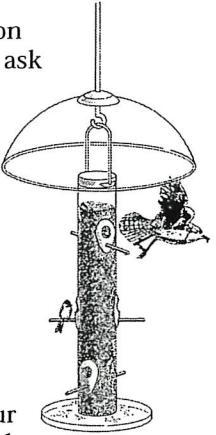
UPCOMING EVENTS – details in this issue

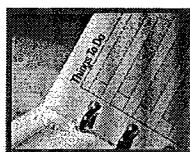
- Nov. 7Rummage Drop-Off: 10 a.m. till 7 p.m.
- Nov. 8Rummage Sale/Birdseed Pick-Up:
see story for details
- Nov. 11Unexpected Conservation Allies:
Lecture Program (details page 2)
- Nov. 16International Birds of Prey Center:
Field Trip (Register by Nov. 15)
- Nov. 23Huntington Beach State Park:
Field Trip (Register by Nov. 22)
- Dec. 7McAlhany Fall Cookout:
Noon till 5 p.m. (RSVP by Dec. 4)

Seeking Reader Submissions:

Do you have a favorite local birding spot? Do you use a field guide that has all the others beat? Have you taken any great birding photos lately? Did you get the most bang for your buck with those binoculars you're using? If so, then send your reviews, comments, or photos to the *Squawk* and we'll share them in a future issue.

Email your submissions to squawk@bleezarde.com or mail them to CNHS Audubon, POB 504, Charleston, SC 29402.





MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

►Upcoming Programs, Outings & Lowcountry Events

Unexpected Allies in Conservation

► Tuesday, November 11: Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin Charleston Audubon Monthly Membership Program

Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin, Jr., Senior Research Ecologist at the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Lab (SREL) who will present a slideshow and lecture on "An Unexpected Ally in Support of Ecological Research and Conservation: The Church".

Join us at the Charleston Museum, Tuesday, November 11 with a reception at 6:30 p.m. followed by the program at 7 p.m.

This presentation describes how environmental concerns have become increasingly focused on issues that could determine the survival of various species of plants and animals, as well as human civilization itself. Therefore, it should not be surprising that these issues have become central concerns of many of the world's major religious denominations.

Examples are given of ways in which the Presbyterian church (USA) and other North American religions have begun to become involved in the direct support of ecological research and education, and in championing a variety of specific conservation concerns.

Church funded examples range from support for radiotelemetric studies of box turtle movements and behavior (the so-called "Tag a Turtle for Jesus" program), to ecological and genetic research on an insular population of feral donkeys. The growing potential to see environmental concerns included in church foreign missions is shown by Presbyterian Church efforts in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa to secure crocodile conservation through sustained-yield harvests and ranching.

SREL is a research unit of The University of Georgia in Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy. Its mission is to provide an independent evaluation of the ecological effects of Savannah River Site operations through a program of ecological research, education, and outreach with emphasis upon expanding the understanding of ecological processes and principles, and evaluating the impact of industrial and land use activities on the environment. SREL currently has a staff of about 150 people, most of whom are employees of the University of Georgia.

Charleston Audubon Field Trips

The CNHS/Audubon sponsors at least one field trip/outing per month, September thru May. Field trips are free, unless otherwise noted, and are open to the general public. Please wear suitable outdoor gear and note that a brown bag lunch is often appropriate.

Please register with the trip leader, by 6 p.m. the day before the outing. (This is to allow the leaders to plan appropriately for the size of the group.) All trip participants are required to sign an "acknowledgement of risk" statement as required by our insurance carrier.

Audubon Outings—

► Sunday, November 16 – Center for Birds of Prey Charleston Audubon Half-Day Fieldtrip

Join outings chairman Burton Moore and Bob Chinn on Sunday November 16th for a trip to the new 150 acre site for the International Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw. The Director, Jim Elliott, will stop by during the trip and explain the center's new and expanded mission (see below).

This is the center's new site. We will help to expand the wild bird list of the site to be displayed in the new visitors center. We hope to see some migrating raptors, various winter field species and maybe some rails and early waterfowl.

Meet Burton and Bob at the Lowe's lot at Towne Centre in Mt. Pleasant at 7:30 a.m. This will be a half-day trip. To register call Burton, 853-1100 (Tu.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.) or Bob at 552-7884.

► Sunday, November 23 – Huntington Beach State Park Charleston Audubon All-Day Fieldtrip

Join outings chairman Burton Moore and Citadel professor Dr. Dennis Forsythe on Sunday, November 23rd for our annual outing to Huntington Beach State Park. This is a favorite winter site for shorebirds and waterfowl along the SC coast. We hope to see Piping Plovers, Purple Sandpipers, Gannet, Sea ducks and various sparrows and resident Ground Doves and more. This will be an all-day trip so pack a lunch and extra clothing in case of inclement weather.

All participants should be aware of the 2-3 mile round trip to the jetty and back. Meet Burton and Dennis at the Lowe's lot at Towne Centre in Mt. Pleasant at 7:30 a.m. To register call Burton, 853-1100 (Tu.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.). Note that we may each need to pay a \$5 entry fee.

Changes at the Bird of Prey Center

In April, 2003 Princess Anne of Great Britain visited the Lowcountry to announce the merger of The SC Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw, SC and the National Birds of Prey Centre in Gloucestershire, England, forming the International Center for Birds of Prey. The International Center's new facility will be situated on a 152 acre tract donated by Charleston attorney Joseph F. Rice and his family. The land is located on Highway 17 North, at the Mt. Pleasant/Awendaw border and the new center is expected to open in the summer of 2004.

A Science/Education/Conservation building will feature interpretive displays, classrooms and laboratories for formal instruction and educational programs. A separate enclave will be designated for a comprehensive Avian Medical Center that will treat hundreds of injured hawks, eagles, osprey, falcons and other birds each year. This facility will also serve the educational mission of the center as a training facility for veterinary students and practitioners, and as a considerable resource for researchers. In December 2003, over two hundred birds will be brought from England to the new center.

Continued Conservation Efforts Mean Hope for Bonneau Ferry

by Andy Harrison

The headline for a front-page article in a recent *Post and Courier* issue (October 13, 2003) read, "Home builders find Promised Land in Berkeley County." And it is true: because of lower land costs and fewer building restrictions, developers are swarming over the southern and western sections of the county. According to the article, some 7,000 new homes – at the very least – will be added there in the next five to seven years.

About 250,000 acres of public land are contained within the Francis Marion National Forest in Berkeley and Charleston Counties, but the largely rural nature of the lands bordering the Forest is changing rapidly. This boom in residential and business construction will eventually affect how the Forest Service is able to use management tools such as prescribed burning (critical for maintaining longleaf pine habitat for the red-cockaded woodpecker and other plant and animal species) in compartments near the newly developed areas.

As long as people keep moving to the SC Lowcountry, drawn in many cases by the natural beauty found here, there will be pressure to build: new subdivisions, new roads, new schools and so on. I grew up on James Island and can remember when much of the island was still undeveloped and there were large wooded tracts along Folly Road. Although change is inevitable, there are positive steps that can be taken by those who mourn the loss of natural spaces.

One is to do what is possible to ensure that development is done rationally. Another is to try and preserve as much undeveloped land that is biologically or culturally significant as possible. A stellar example of the successful application of both approaches is Audubon's own Francis Beidler Forest in Four Holes Swamp.

Led by Norman Brunswig, executive director of the SC office of the National Audubon Society and sanctuary manager of Beidler Forest, environmentalists have managed for eight years to forestall the construction of a proposed 4000-seat racetrack on a site just a few short miles from the Forest. This past month they won a major victory when the SC DHEC board voted to require a more intensive review of the potential impact of the racetrack on the sanctuary, a move many see as the death knell for the speedway.

In addition, Francis Beidler Forest will soon acquire the 909 acre Mizzell Tract from MeadWestvaco Corporation. This tract includes 750 acres of high quality bottomland hardwoods and has been described as a "critical addition" to Beidler. The purchase was made possible by a collaboration between Audubon, The Nature Conservancy and Pine Tree Conservation; a \$1 million competitive grant awarded to Audubon and TNC from the federally funded North American Wetlands Conservation Act; and years of discussions with representatives from MeadWestvaco.

Our local Audubon chapter contributed to the success of the NAWCA grant application by allowing the value of the conservation easement on the McAlhany Nature Preserve, given to the

Lowcountry Open Land Trust by us in 2001, to be used towards the required matching funds. Through similar acquisitions over the past 30-plus years, Francis Beidler Forest has grown from around 3,400 acres in 1969 to 12,723 acres today (including the Mizzell Tract).

There is reason to hope that another large chunk of land in Berkeley County may soon be preserved. Over the past eight months, nearly \$44 million in Department of Interior appropriations and federal grants has been lined-up toward the purchase of the Bonneau Ferry tract (September 25, 2003 *Post and Courier*). In addition to longleaf pine stands and old rice fields, this 10,697-acre tract – located between Mepkin Abbey and Cordesville in the Cooper River Historic District – also contains sites of historical significance, such as the walls of a masonry house (1738) at Comingtee Plantation, the ruins of a rice mill, and granite mile markers (1783) lining the old river road leading to Charleston.

Negotiations between the current owner, MeadWestvaco Corporation, and the SC DNR (with help from the non-profit Conservation Fund) are in progress – no official asking price has been released but it is said to be in the neighborhood of \$50 million. Both Senator Fritz Hollings (who has played a major role in seeking funds from the 2003 and 2004 Interior Department appropriations) and Governor Mark Sanford (who has been involved in the negotiations with MeadWestvaco) are anxious to see the land protected. Developers are also eager to acquire the land, though, and some apparently envision the tract as a golf community (July 11, 2003 *Post and Courier*). No matter how well done, it would be a shame to lose Bonneau Ferry to such an end.

If the ongoing negotiations are successful, the state of SC will have saved an immensely valuable piece of forested land for future generations. Such opportunities will arise less and less often in the years to come.

— Andy Harrison serves on our Conservation Committee

The CNHS/Audubon Board for 2003-04

President: Tom Snowden w 953-0311, h 875-3445

Vice President: Joe Cockrell w 462-2150, h 762-3868

Secretary: Melissa Davis h 216-3833

Treasurer: Doreen Cubie h 928-3702

Ex Officio: Bob Chinn h 552-7884

Historian: Julian Harrison

Newsletter: Steve Bleezarde h 406-2061

Committees -----

Hospitality: Don Jones h 572-8232

Education: Melissa Davis

Membership: Doreen Cubie

Publicity: is open at this time.

Outings: Burton Moore 853-1100, Bob Chinn, Andy Harrison

Programs: Polly Holden 853-1100, Burton Moore

Conservation: Garrett Budds h 571-4668, Andy Harrison

McAlhany: Joe Cockrell, Julian Harrison, Garrett Budds, Marion Page, Jeff Dennis.

Wannamaker: Norm Brunswig (843)688-5833, Julian Harrison, Marion Page, Dan Tufford

Interested in joining a committee? Contact one of the members listed, or talk to chapter president Tom Snowden about how you can help.