

THE Lesser SQUAWK

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

Audubon

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.

DHEC, continued from page 1

If the General Assembly doesn't take action on the issue, the plan will become law this summer, 180 days after DHEC's approval. The Legislature also could vote to approve the regulations before that period ends, or, under pressure from developers could vote to strike down the plan or send it back to DHEC for more work.

Local developers have defeated similar measures in the past and have said that they will continue to press the Legislature to choose the same fate for this one. "In a lot of cases, you are looking at a mud hole rather than something significant," said John Templeton, a Charleston area real estate broker and property rights advocate. (*Post and Courier*, 1/16/04)

Conservation groups applauded the move as a step in the right direction. These wetlands are vital to the health of the environment in South Carolina—and in other states. Even President Bush acknowledged that scientific reality by halting a proposal that would have further diminished wetlands protections and affirming his support for the "no net loss" concept.

As the Post and Courier urged in a January 16 editorial, the General Assembly should support DHEC's efforts to restore reasonable safeguards to this important natural resource, and we should contact our State Senators and Representatives and urge them to do so.

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DHEC Ruling to Protect Wetlands Needs Support in the Legislature

South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) approved a plan in January that affects as many as 500,000 acres of state wetlands. The DHEC board's decision was in response to a 2001 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that reduced the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' regulatory authority over isolated wetlands. The DHEC ruling came despite opposition from some business groups, including the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, which has threatened to fight the issue in the state's Senate and House of Representatives.

Isolated wetlands, which comprise at least 10 percent of the state's approximately 4 million acres of wetlands, are pockets of marsh, mountain bogs and gum ponds. Though isolated from rivers and waterways, they remain critical assets in providing wildlife habitat, controlling floods and cleaning storm water.

Under DHEC's plan, which will require developers to get permits before filling in such bogs, builders will also be required to offset the loss of isolated wetlands by protecting land elsewhere.

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Photographer and Environmental Analyst Presents Piping Plover Program

Sidney Maddock, Environmental Analyst with the Center for Biological Diversity, will present a program including his professional photographs of the threatened Piping Plover at the Charleston Audubon's membership meeting, **Tuesday, February 10, at the Charleston Museum**, 360 Meeting Street, across from the Charleston Visitor Center. A reception begins at 6:30 p.m. and Mr. Maddock's presentation will begin at 7 p.m. Programs are held regularly on the second Tuesday of the month, are free and open to the public.

Using a powerful telephoto lens and practiced observation techniques, Mr. Maddock's photos provide a level of detail beyond what is regularly observable with binoculars or even spotting scopes. His

portfolio includes plovers feeding, resting, bathing, nesting and brooding chicks. His photos also show some of the many threats to this rare shorebird and will introduce an interesting discussion of the conservation challenges facing the Piping Plover across its range.

Mr. Maddock is particularly interested in conservation efforts for the threatened piping plover and also works to protect other species found in beach sand and dune habitats of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, longleaf pine forests and Everglades wetland habitats. He has a B.A. from Brown University and a J.D. from the University of Florida. His photos have been used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Canadian Wildlife Service and others in their education efforts.

UPCOMING EVENTS – details in this issue

- Feb. 1 Santee National Wildlife Refuge Fieldtrip: All day outing (details pg. 2)
- Feb. 5 Legislative Breakfast & Conservation Lobby Day (details pg. 3)
- Feb. 10 Piping Plover: Conservation & Photography: Program mtg. (details above)
- Feb. 13-16 Great Backyard Bird Count: www.birdsource.org (details pg. 2)
- Feb. 28 Wannamaker Clean-Up & Tour: (details pg. 3)

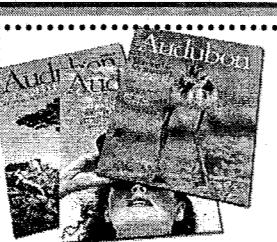
How to Contact Your Elected Officials

Email addresses for Charleston's County Council are online: go to www.charlestoncounty.org and follow the links to Elected Officials, County Council and then Contacts.

Information for Berkeley and Dorchester Counties can be found at www.co.berkeley.sc.us and www.dorchestercounty.net.

For State House and Senate Members go to: www.scstatehouse.net and follow the links to either House or Senate and then Email Addresses.

The mailing address for all House Members is: P.O. Box 11867, Columbia SC 29211; for all Senate Members it is: P.O. Box 142, Columbia SC 29202.



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.

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P.O. BOX 504
CHARLESTON, SC 29402

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

President's Message:

The Charleston Natural History Society is fortunate to have been given two very interesting and beautiful pieces of property. We encourage all of you to try to get out and see these unique sanctuaries. We will be planning some activities this spring that should interest many of you.

Our December cookout at the **McAlhany Preserve** was a great success so be on the lookout for plans for a spring outing. We plan on having a get together in early spring, before the bugs get bad and while there are plenty of spring migrating birds to see. And McAlhany has some areas of unusual spring wildflowers that should be in bloom.

The **Wannamaker** sanctuary is near St. Matthews SC. We're planning to join Audubon members from across the state in a morning clean up and afternoon tour of the property on February 28, 2004. Please come out and join us!

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



MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Upcoming Programs, Outings & Lowcountry Events

Santee NWR Fieldtrip

► Sunday, February 1, 2004 – 7:15 a.m.
All Day Outing to Bluff and Cuddo Units

Join outings chairman Burton Moore for a field trip to the Santee National Wildlife Refuge's Bluff and Cuddo units. This will be a winter waterfowl and sparrow chasing outing so please dress warmly.

The Bluff unit is right on the lake and has been the traditional wintering area for a *real* migratory flock of Canada Geese for many years. There are usually other geese species mixed in with the Canadas such as Snow Geese (White & Blue phase), Greater White-fronted Geese, and an occasional Ross' Goose. Last year we were treated to some 14 Sandhill Cranes as well.

The nearby Cuddo unit is a vast network of old fields where Burton has seen many rare sparrows, such as Leconte's and Fox sparrows.

Pack a hearty lunch for all day in the field. Meet Burton at the Summerville Wal-Mart parking lot, off I-26 exit 199A, at 7:15 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 1st. (Geese get up early, so should we).

What's the Count?

by Andy Harrison

We are well into the New Year now, and the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season has come and gone. Here in the Lowcountry we are fortunate to have a large number of count circles within easy driving distance of Charleston. Many of these annual censuses have been carried out for decades, and that long time span is probably the most important facet of the data that have been collected—By examining long-term data sets like the CBC records, biologists can identify changes and trends in early-winter bird species' populations and ranges.

For many birders these days the compilation of species tallies doesn't end with the CBC season, however. Last year I joined my father for the first time in keeping a "year list" of birds that I observed in the state of South Carolina. This made every field trip a little more exciting because of the prospect of adding a new species to my list. For example, on the Charleston Audubon Society outing that Burton Moore and Dennis Forsythe led to the Savannah Spoil Site in September 2003, I saw 19 year birds (including Roseate Spoonbill, American Avocet and two "life list" birds: Franklin's Gull and Wilson's Phalarope).

The ability to post rare or unusual sightings on the Internet—for example, to the CarolinaBirds listserv (www.duke.edu/~cwcook/cbirds.html)—has certainly helped numerous birders find out about such sightings quickly enough to make a trip and see the bird themselves. And you don't have to restrict yourself to a single list format: Some birders keep regional year lists or county lists, and you can

Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb. 13-16

During last February's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), bird enthusiasts across North America submitted almost 50,000 checklists totaling more than four million birds. The event, which documented the whereabouts of 573 species, showed a regional decline of at least one of those species that may be the result of West Nile virus. (American Crows were reported in alarmingly fewer numbers in Illinois and Ohio, where West Nile virus has had a strong presence.)

The GBBC was developed to help monitor the abundance and distribution of birds in late winter, helping researchers spot trends before situations become critical. As we see rapid changes in our environment, like the spread of West Nile virus and shifts in species' ranges, bird monitoring projects such as the Great Backyard Bird Count become increasingly important. Please participate, and also consider submitting additional observations to the latest online monitoring tool, eBird.

To participate in the GBBC, visit <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/> and download the tally sheets for our area. Arranged by the Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the count is sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited where you can also pick-up tally sheets.

eBird (<http://www.ebird.org>) lets birders submit their sightings over the Internet to a vast database – anytime, anywhere. Their reports are pooled for access in any number of ways – by location, date, or species or sightings made by other birders.

Some highlights of Burton More's group's sightings on the North end of Bull Island for the Charleston Christmas Bird Count, Jan. 4, 2004:

14 Snow Buntings	150 Redheads
2 Lapland Longspurs	450 Canvasbacks
1 Fulvous Whistling Duck	1000+ American Widgeon
1 Eurasian Widgeon	1000+ Gadwall
4 Snow Geese	2000+ Lesser Scaup
2 White-winged Scoters	7 Greater Scaup
250 Surf Scoters	2000+ Ring-necked Duck
400 Black Scoters	...a record 132 species

even keep a list of the birds that you spot in your own yard. So-called "Big Days" (in which birders try to see as many species as possible in a single day) are becoming a popular activity. Individuals who have identified 200 or more species of birds in SC are eligible to join the Arthur T. Wayne Society (contact Lex Glover, bglvr@clemson.edu, for info.)

There are additional sanctioned bird counts later this year, too. This February 13-16, Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are sponsoring the 7th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (*see details above*). Over the course of these four days "citizen scientists" are invited to submit checklists of birds they have observed, including (but not limited to) those at their backyard feeders. As with the CBC data, ornithologists hope to use the information gathered during the GBBC to learn more about changing bird populations.

The Charleston Audubon also holds a Spring Bird Count every year, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the US Fish and Wildlife Service co-sponsor International Migratory Bird Day throughout North and Central America. So it's a good time to start a year list of your own!

SC Legislative Breakfast and Conservation Lobby Day Scheduled

The upcoming legislative session is crucial for ensuring the long-term protection of South Carolina's natural resources. It has been a difficult few years for our local environment and there's more to come. Upcoming challenges for the conservation community include maintaining funding of the newly created Conservation Bank and restoring protection to isolated wetlands. There are many other issues in the upcoming legislative session that will affect the conservation community as a whole and the Audubon Society will need the help of its members if our collective voice is to be heard.

Recent victories, particularly the Conservation Bank, were a direct result of grassroots campaigns and the combined support of the wide range of groups that spoke out on this issue. Following the adage that "there is strength in numbers" the conservation community is collectively hosting a **Lobby Day** on Thursday, February 5, 2004 in Columbia.

The Day will begin with a breakfast, to be shared by Audubon members and their legislators. A brief workshop on how to effectively speak to your legislator will follow and then it's on to the Statehouse to work for the things that we all care about.

Audubon is inviting its members to come participate in this important event. Audubon's earliest roots can be found in the advocacy of its members. We are one of the strongest grassroots organizations in the nation. Please come out to support this very important day.

RSVP to Scott Winburn at scottw@sccl.org or phone (803)758-5800.

Tentative Lobby Day Schedule —
Thursday, February 5, 8-11 a.m.

Clarion Townhouse,
1615 Gervais St., Columbia

8:00-9:30 a.m. Legislative Breakfast
Speaker on conservation. Members will have a chance to speak with their legislators.

9:30-10:30 a.m. "How to Lobby"
Review of important issues

11:00 a.m. Statehouse Visit
By organizations and members

Visit Our Website

Webmaster Bob Chinn keeps us up-to-date with details of programs, outings & more.
<http://cnhsaudubon.homestead.com>

Audubon Chapters Join Forces For Wannamaker Clean-Up Day

Wannamaker Nature Preserve needs the help of Chapter members. Bequeathed to the Charleston Natural History Society by Jack Wannamaker, the Preserve is 422-acres of former farm fields, classic bottomland hardwood and mature pine stands. The wishes of Jack Wannamaker were that the preserve be used for educational and research purposes.

The site has the potential for the development of several miles of nature trails. Another possibility for the site includes serving as an outdoor classroom for the students of Calhoun County. The future of Wannamaker preserve will help Audubon reach out to the local community and will provide yet another way for the Audubon Society and its members to serve the people of South Carolina. However, before work can progress on any of these plans, the place needs a good cleaning!

On **February 28, 2004 at 9:30 a.m.** Audubon South Carolina will be hosting a clean-up day at Wannamaker. Come for a few hours or all day! Bring lunch and we will provide beverages. Heavy gloves and shrub loppers or pruners are recommended. Crews will help remove debris from the site or clear away exotic plants.

The clean-up will stop at 1:00 p.m. and will be followed by a nature walk on Wannamaker. The walk will last a little under two hours. Some of the terrain at Wannamaker is slightly challenging so participants should be prepared.

How to get there from Charleston: Take I-26 West. Take Exit 149 and follow Hwy 33 through Cameron to SC Hwy 6. Turn left onto SC Hwy 6, and travel for 4.1 miles. Park across the road from the historical marker.

If you have any questions contact April Stallings at (843) 462-2150 or astallings@audubon.org.

Seeking Reader Submissions:

Have you taken any great birding photos lately? Do you use a field guide that has all the others beat? If so, then send your reviews, comments, or photos to the *Squawk* and we'll share them in a future issue. And we can forward photos to the folks assembling the new South Carolina Audubon web site who are asking for submissions.

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

The CNHS/Audubon Board for 2003-04

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

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Committees -----

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Education: Melissa Davis

Membership: Doreen Cubie

Publicity: is open at this time.

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

Programs: Polly Holden 762-4806

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.