

## For Your Consideration: Birds and Birders in Books

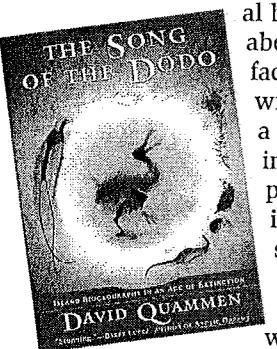
*The Song of the Dodo* is not about birds or birding. However, it is a tremendously educational book that teaches us

about the challenges we face if we want to preserve wildlife, including birds, in a world increasingly cut-up into smaller and smaller pieces. It is a book about island biogeography, the study of the distribution of plants and animals on the world's islands – what lives where, and

why. It's brimming over with fascinating animals and exotic places; it vividly portrays a critical component in the current struggle to preserve the world's wildlife.

Islands have seen a wildly disproportionate share of species extinctions over the last few centuries. The dodo, the large, flightless pigeon from the island of Mauritius, was the first recorded species to be driven to extinction by humans, in 1662. Since then, there has been a cascade of extinctions on islands around the world.

As humans have spread over the planet, the relatively few protected land areas have become islands in a sea of development – separated from each other as surely as Mauritius is sepa-



rated from Africa. Not surprisingly, the patterns of extinction on continents are becoming more and more like those on islands.

To preserve the world's biodiversity, scientists are turning to the study of island biogeography for answers, but the public has remained largely unaware that such a field of study even exists. This book may help to change that. Author David Quammen is one of the best science writers working today. In *The Song of the Dodo*, he gives insightful portraits of field scientists at work; fascinating glimpses of scientists of the past; even a dynamic travelogue as he follows the trail of study to exotic and far-off places. He also does a very good job of explaining the principles of island biogeography and their importance in our current global extinction crisis.

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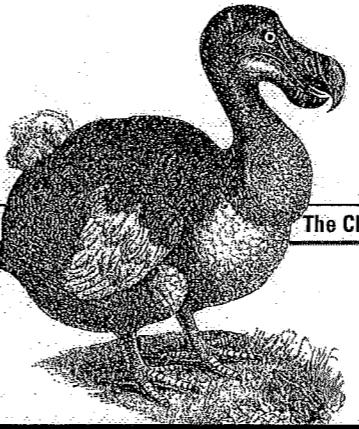
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Charleston Audubon Society



## Fall Lecture Series at County Library

Our lecture series is now being held in the second floor auditorium of the main branch of the Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun Street in Charleston. Lectures remain free, and open to all Audubon members, guests and to the general public. We gather at 6:30 p.m. for a reception and speakers will begin their programs at 7:00 p.m.

## The Southern Appalachians: Conservation Challenges in a Temperate Biodiverse Hotspot

Wednesday, November 10

Joe Bernardo, Ph.D., assistant professor of biology at the College of Charleston, will present a program on the need for conservation and ongoing study of the tremendous biodiversity of the Southern Appalachians.

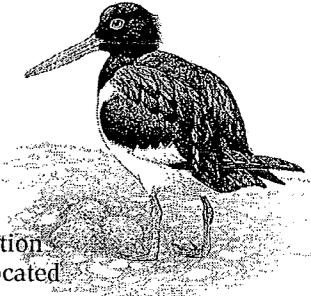
There is a great deal to be learned about Southern Appalachian flora, fauna and habitat; In the last decade, comprehensive sampling and research has revealed more than a dozen new species of salamanders in this region, and more are still being discovered. Our state of knowledge of other taxa, such as invertebrates – which are far more abundant, and far less-studied – is obviously very poor.

For more information, don't miss this lecture and visit the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Institute online at: <http://www.sabionline.org>.

## The American Oystercatcher in South Carolina's Cape Romain

Wednesday, January 12, 2005

Felicia Sanders, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Biologist at the Santee Coastal Reserve, will discuss the breeding biology and winter foraging habits of the largest concentration of American oystercatchers on the Atlantic coast located in the Cape Romain Region.



Stretching for 22 miles along the coast of South Carolina, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge is a rich and beautiful natural resource managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The Refuge was established in 1932 as migratory bird refuge totaling 64,000 acres of barrier islands (Bull, Cape, and Lighthouse Islands and Raccoon Keys), salt marshes, intricate coastal waterways, long sandy beaches, fresh and brackish water impoundments and maritime forest. Birders can observe peak waterfowl numbers in late November or early December. At this time most of the Atlantic Coast's oyster-catcher population is on the refuge.

The eastern race of the American oystercatcher has been identified as an "extremely high priority" shorebird by the Working Group for the Southeastern Coastal Plain as part of the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan. This designation is based on estimated numbers of American oystercatchers totaling less than 10,000 and the decline of suitable beach nesting habitat. Additionally, the number of breeding pairs from Virginia to Florida is declining and studies have documented low reproductive success. Nesting failures result from avian and mammalian depredation of eggs, over-wash of nests by high tides and boat wakes and nest abandonment resulting from human disturbance at nesting sites. Censuses in the winter of 1988 and 1989 by the SCDNR and Coastal Carolina University around Cape Romain reported a peak of 2,401 birds. Results of a SCDNR survey in 2001 suggest a 21% decline in oystercatchers in the Cape Romain Region over 14 years.

## UPCOMING EVENTS – details in this issue

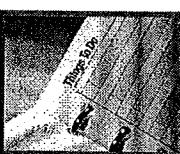
Nov. 7 ..... McAlhany Work Day ..... p. 2

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5 ..... Picnic at McAlhany ..... p. 2

*Don't forget the upcoming 2004 Christmas Bird Counts. Dates and details in the Dec.-Jan. Lesser Squawk.*



## MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

### Upcoming Programs, Outings & Lowcountry Events

#### ■ Nov. 5-14 – Bird Seed Pick-Up

Did you order bird seed in this year's sale? Don't forget to get your seed. Pick-up is easy this year. Instead of a one-day pick-up, this year you should visit the area Wild Birds Unlimited store you chose when you ordered (Mount Pleasant or West Ashley), during the ten-day pick-up time, Friday, November 5 thru Sunday the 14th.

Please contact Mike Hutchinson (884-7746, 425-4047, mhutchinson15@comcast.net), if you won't be able to pick-up your seed.

#### ■ Sunday, Nov. 7 – McAlhany Work Day

We're going to make use of the November Open House to get some work done – there is litter to pick up along Wire Road, and assorted brush and downed limbs to clear. Joe will be on site by 9 a.m., volunteers are welcome to arrive anytime, and to stay only as long as they like. We'll wrap-up about 4 p.m.

The McAlhany 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. We're making plans now for a December 5 picnic, so make plans to come on out.

**Directions to McAlhany:** 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 Road, cross over I-95 and continue for several miles and look for our signs on the left (the main sign is set-back somewhat, so look carefully.) More detailed directions to McAlhany are on our website, or contact Joe Cockrell (h)762-3868.

#### ■ Saturday, Nov. 20 – Huntington Beach State Park

Join Andy Harrison for a day trip to Huntington Beach State Park. This park's variety of habitats – including a freshwater lagoon, saltmarsh, maritime forest, extensive beach and

#### \*Charleston Audubon Field Trips

We sponsor at least one field trip/outing per month, September - May. Field trips are free, unless otherwise noted, and 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, (allowing leaders to plan appropriately for the size of the group). All participants sign an "acknowledgement of risk" statement as required by our insurance carrier.

access to the jetty fronting Murrell's Inlet – make it one of the best birding sites along the East Coast. It also is the site of Atalaya Castle, former winter home and studio of American sculptress, Anna Hyatt Huntington, and her husband, Archer Milton Huntington.

Meet Andy at 7:30 a.m. Saturday, November 20 in the Lowe's parking lot near Mt Pleasant Towne Centre (behind IHOP). Bring binoculars/scopes, field guides, water, food/snacks, and sunscreen/insect repellent. Good walking shoes are recommended. Even in November the weather can be quite variable – it could be warm, or cold and blustery (especially on the open beach).

There is a part entrance fee: It's \$5 for adults, \$4.25 for seniors and \$3 for children ages 6-15 (free for kids 5 and under). Register with Andy at 795-6934 or by email at [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com) by Friday, November 19.

The park is located on Hwy 17, 3 mi. S. of Murrells Inlet, and 20 mi. N. of Georgetown.

#### ■ Sunday, Dec. 5 – Cookout at McAlhany

Our Fall cookout at McAlhany is a good chance to get out and see the property. This year we'll be firing up the grill about 1 p.m. with burgers and hot dogs, and Joe will be smoking a chunk of pork that morning. People are asked to bring a dish, a salad or a dessert. We'll have some drinks, guests are welcome to BYOB. Don't forget that family and friends are welcome!

The gate will be open at 8 a.m. Come early if you'd like to take a walk around the property – we'll leave from the cabin about 10:30 a.m. We'll start to eat about 1:30, possibly a little later. We'll wrap-up before 5:00 p.m.

Bring binoculars, field guides and appetites!

#### ■ Saturday, March 5, 2005 – Rummage Sale

We're making plans now for our Spring Rummage Sale and ask you to please mark your calendars and start collecting items we'll be able to sell. Books, clothes, tools and household items are welcome – anything you might find at a yard sale. Future newsletter updates will include information on how you can help and how we'll be collecting items.

#### Visit Us Online



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

November, 2004

## THE LESSER SQUAWK

The Charleston Audubon  
The Charleston Natural  
History Society  
P.O. Box 504  
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November, 2004

## THE LESSER SQUAWK

by Conservation Chair Andy Harrison

The debate over whether or not – and if so, how – to extend protection to isolated wetlands in SC promises to be a key conservation issue in the coming year.

Among the functions these rather poorly-named bodies of water perform are: reducing damages from floodwater runoff; purifying inputted waters; recharging aquifers; and serving as "hotspots" for plant and animal diversity. Although isolated wetlands usually lack apparent surface water connections to streams and rivers, they are integral parts of the hydrologic landscape because of their links to groundwater. Wetlands such as Carolina Bays also provide refuge for dozens of rare plant species (including Pond Berry and Venus' Fly Trap) and critical breeding habitat for migratory songbirds, waterfowl and amphibians (such as the threatened Flatwoods Salamander).

Prior to 2001 isolated wetlands were federally protected under provisions of the Clean Water Act, and the US Army Corps of Engineers was charged with regulating activities in those wetlands. However, after the SWANCC decision in the U.S. Supreme Court, this protection was stripped from wetlands lacking a constant connection to navigable waters.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has estimated that at least 312,000 acres (and perhaps as many as 562,000 acres) of wetlands in our state are now considered "non-jurisdictional." Given the high – and accelerating – rate of development of rural land in S.C., isolated wetlands (and the functions they provide) are extremely vulnerable to destruction. This is especially true given the high concentration of isolated wetlands in areas east of I-95, exactly where development pressure is the greatest. Preservation of these wetlands will require action by the S.C. legislature.

Over the course of the past few weeks DHEC has sponsored a series of stakeholder meetings at various locations across S.C. in order to solicit public comment about 12 specific issues (i.e., jurisdiction, delineation, mitigation, etc.) that should be considered in any potential state wetlands legislation. I attended such a meeting at the Charleston County Public Library on September 29. The meeting was well attended, and a wide range of viewpoints were expressed in a mostly civil atmosphere. Recorders were present to add any "new" comments to a running list that has been maintained since the first meeting in Myrtle Beach. These collected comments can

## Join the Conservation Committee And Become More Involved!

If you are interested in conservation issues and have some free time, please consider joining the Conservation Committee. I became chairperson in August for a committee of one and could use your help – one more member has joined me so far. This year I want to increase our presence in the community by attending hearings on environmental issues and

promoting letter, email and telephone campaigns.

You can contact me by phone at 795-6934 or email me at [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com).

Thanks!  
Andy Harrison

be downloaded from the following web site:  
[www.scdhec.gov/water/pubs/pnwetinput.doc](http://www.scdhec.gov/water/pubs/pnwetinput.doc).

Speakers in favor of regulation often pointed-out the valuable functions isolated wetlands provide and argued against excluding entire classes of wetlands from regulation. Those opposed to regulation spoke out against what they saw as a trampling of personal property rights, potentially burdensome levels of regulation that would drive up housing costs, and a perceived legislative "step backwards." The issue is complex, and an effective, comprehensive wetlands protection bill will require both sides to reach a workable compromise. For example, in addition to penalties for unlawful wetland destruction or failure to mitigate permitted actions, there should be some kind of incentive for landowners to protect wetlands on their property.

However, those who want to develop isolated wetlands should recognize that there are costs associated with each wetland that is lost – and all the citizens of SC will share those costs, not just the folks who destroyed it.

Isolated wetlands are a valuable asset to the state of S.C., and they deserve some measure of protection. Using existing federal guidelines for "jurisdictional" wetlands as a model would reduce confusion and not impose burdensome levels of regulation on development interests.

## Want to Know More?

There is a wealth of information online to help you learn more about South Carolina's wetlands and the ongoing effort to define the state's authority to protect them. A good place to start is the following page which includes background, a description of the SELC's efforts and links to conservation groups and press coverage since the 2001 Supreme Court decision:  
[http://www.selcga.org/Cases/sc\\_wetlands/SC\\_wetlands.shtml](http://www.selcga.org/Cases/sc_wetlands/SC_wetlands.shtml)

## Advocacy Training Workshop Scheduled by SC Audubon

For anyone interested in learning how to become a better advocate for the environment, Audubon is sponsoring a one day workshop on Saturday, November 13th from 10:30 AM to 2:00 PM on the campus of the University of South Carolina.

Catherine Grant, an Audubon lobbyist from Washington, D.C., is coming in to discuss the basics of interacting with lawmakers on funding requests and conservation issues. National and state level issues will be covered. A state Representative yet to be determined will also be speaking about the changing political nature of the legislature and some conservation initiatives we can expect to see in the new session.

To register and/or learn more about the workshop, contact April Stallings at [astallings@audubon.org](mailto:astallings@audubon.org). Andy Harrison, Conservation Committee chairperson, is planning to attend – so if you want to carpool, don't hesitate to contact him at 795-6934 or by e-mail at [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com).