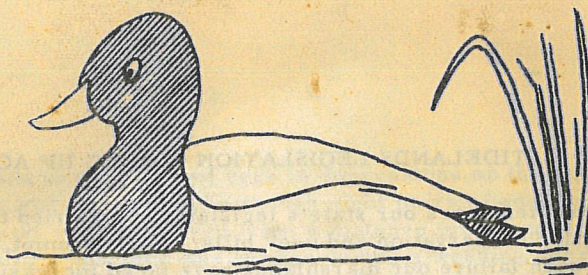


the lesser

Squawk



Published at Charleston, S. C., by the Charleston Natural History Society, Inc., November 1971. XXIII No. 10. Editors: Mrs. D. L. Fleischmann, Harietta, McClellanville, S. C. 29458, Ph. 546-6061 and Farley Smith, Jr., 96 King Street, Charleston, S. C. 29401, Ph. 722-0700.

OFFICERS

President: Waddell F. Robey, Jr., 3 St. Michael's Alley, Charleston, S. C. 29401.

Vice-President: John G. McDougal, 1 New Town Lane, Charleston, S. C. 29412

Sectetary-Treasurer: Alan M. Bills, 116 Presidents Circle, Summer-ville, S. C. 29483.

JANUARY ACTIVITIES

The regular meeting will be on Tuesday, January 11 at 8:00 PM in the lecture room of the Charleston Museum. The program will consist of a talk by Dr. Roy T. Sawyer, assistant professor of biology at the College of Charleston. He will discuss some general aspects of LEECHES - what they are, where they occur - explode some of the myths that have grown up around them, and spend some time on the local species, particularly the marine types. This promises to be an interesting program about a little-known aspect of natural history.

The field trip this month will be an all day trip to the Santee National Wildlife Refuge near Summerton, South Carolina. The date is January 23, and the leader will be Julian Harrison. Those who went on this trip last year will remember the most enlightening tour given by the refuge manager, Mel Evans. There is a new manager this year, Mr. Charles Strickland, and so we can look forward to a different point of view. Those wishing to take part in this trip should meet at the Charleston Museum at 6:00 AM on January 23 or be at the refuge by 7:30 AM.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Twenty-six members and guests of the Society met on January 2nd to conduct the annual Christmas count. At this writing the tabulation of the count was still in progress, so there is no official word yet. Unofficial comments indicate that it is a "poor and disappointing" year. The prolonged warm weather may have been a contributing factor. In any case Dr. Julian Harrison will give us a full report in the near future.

TIDELANDS LEGISLATION COMING UP AGAIN

For at least ten years our state's legislators have tried to enact a variety of marshlands "conservation and use" bills. Each attempt, thus far, has failed, and with each failure our marshlands have faced increasing perils.

We are going to try again this year. With your help, 1972 could be the winning year.

State Representative Sidi Limehouse is presently drafting a tidelands bill. The legislation will recognize that there is a need for multiple-usage of some of our marshes, but it will also include a solid zoning and permit system which will enable us to fully protect our most valuable estaurine zones.

Representative Limehouse has called upon a number of this Society's members to advise and assist him in preparing this legislation. Similarly each of us can also assist in this effort by giving our individual support.

Effective, successful legislation results from the interaction of the legislator and his public support. Our support will give this proposed legislation the needed elements of urgency and public demand.

I ask each of you to write to Representative Limehouse confirming your support and urging the early introduction of a tidelands zoning/conservation bill. Please take the time now, this month, and write.

If we lose our marshlands it won't be the industrialists or the land developer who are responsible. It will be us by virtue of inaction. Saving life, any form of life, takes personal involvement and commitment. Please, let's get involved, now, and save our tidelands, this year.

Waddell Robey

LEAST TERNS IN A CANTELOUPE FIELD PATCH

On May 17, 1971, as I walked into a large canteloupe field at the U. S. Vegetable Breeding Laboratory on Savannah Highway, I was met by a flight of dive-bombing Least Terns. The air was full of them screaming, diving at my head, and clicking their beaks. This unusual behavior suggested the possibility of nests which were soon discovered.

Seven nests of one to two mottled eggs in depressions on the paper mulched eighty inch wide beds were found although eight pairs of adult terns were seen. These nests were observed from a distance for the next three weeks. Two were eaten by a fox, one was broken during a weeding operation, two were abandoned when canteloupe vines overgrew them, and two appeared to have hatched even though no young were ever seen. The two that hatched were watched for many days, and adults carried small fish to the area, obviously feeding something, but vine growth made it impossible to see the young. In mid June, after all terns left the field three abandoned eggs were collected for further study.

Least Terns are seen occasionally over the irrigation ponds along the tidal creek that borders the station and sometimes with Ringbill and Laughing Gulls in recently plowed fields, but their nests have never been observed before in our plots.

Perhaps there is an explanation for the unusual nesting sight chosen by these Least Terns, but none has been suggested by the many birders I have talked to. If any readers have ideas on this, their comments would make interesting reading in subsequent issues of the "Lesser Squawk". Color slides were taken of the nests and can be shown to any interested person.

Perry E. Nugent

SANDHILLS IN CAROLINA

Sandhill cranes, seldomly seen in South Carolina, have been sighted near Adams Run.

Mrs. L. M. Glover of Adams Run said she saw five sandhills flying overhead near her home on December 19.

It is the first reported sighting of sandhills in the state this year.

Last year, two sandhills were seen flying over Interstate 26 near Charleston.

Mr. Lawrence Walker of Summerville said he saw the two large birds near Milepost 207 at approximately 11:30 AM November 30, 1970.

He said the birds were flying at an altitude of approximately 300 feet.

In their book "South Carolina Birdlife", E. B. Chamberlain and Alexander Sprunt, Jr. list sandhills as "casual" visitors to eastern and southern parts of the state.

On December 30, 1966 Mr. John Henry Dick of Dixie Plantation in Hollywood sighted fourteen sandhills in the marshes of Pon-Pon across the Edisto River from Willtown Bluff.

As the crow flies, Pon-Pon is only about three miles from Adams Run where Mrs. Glover sighted the five sandhills earlier this month.

THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

Sky-watchers who have an unobstructed view of the southeast and south might begin their observations about 6:00 AM in early January. The heavens then present the view that is to be seen in June after twilight has yielded to the darkness of night. Scorpius will be completely above the horizon, and to the east of it, rising in the constellation, Sagittarius, Jupiter and Mercury will be in conjunction. This will take place on January 7. For about a week following, Mercury will continue to be visible, but its distance from Jupiter will widen eastward until it disappears in the glare of the rising sun.

In the evening, after sunset, the first bright object to be seen is Venus. This most beautiful and brilliant of the planets will continue to dominate the western half of the sky during the first six months of 1972. In January, it sets about three hours after the sun.

Near the meridian at dark, Mars may be recognized by its reddish color. It will be noted, however, that its brilliance is decidedly diminished, for the earth is far out-distancing her neighbor as they orbit the sun.

By 9:00 PM at mid-month, Taurus will be located nearly overhead. Aldebaran, (the "red angry eye"), will be on the meridian, and near by, Saturn will be unmistakable by its steady yellow light. Owners of telescopes will have an unusually fine opportunity to see the rings of Saturn at this time.

They are now open to the widest extent, and those who view them for the first time will never forget the thrill of the experience.

On January 3, our home-planet, Earth will reach perihelion, or the point at which it is closest to the sun. On that date, Earth will be about 4 million miles nearer to the sun than it will be next July. The paradox of colder temperatures at this time of year is due to the tilt of the northern hemisphere of the earth away from the sun.

On January 30, there will be a total eclipse of the moon, visible from the whole of North America. This will take place during the early morning hours in Charleston, when the moon is west of the meridian. At 4:11 AM, the earth's shadow will first appear at the edge of the moon. From 5:35 to 6:12, the moon will be completely immersed in the shadow, giving the impression of a copper-colored ball suspended in space. Before the eclipse is over, the moon will set, so that only those living, or visiting in the Central Time Zone, - and westward, - will be able to observe its emergence from the shadow.

From the first day to the last, therefore, January, 1972 holds bright promise for enthusiastic Sky-watchers.

Elizabeth D. Simons

MARINE RESEARCH BUILDING TO BE NAMED IN HONOR OF DR. LUNZ

The South Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission announced today that the Department's new Marine Research Building, a part of the Marine Resources Center in Charleston, will be named in honor of the late Dr. G. Robert Lunz.

"Naming this research building after Bob Lunz is proper and natural; his pioneering efforts in marine ecology and his fight to preserve South Carolina's tidelands are an inspiration for this Center", said Commission Chairman Clyde A. Eltzroth. Eltzroth went on to say that the Center will include among its many projects some of the research programs originally envisioned by Dr. Lunz.

Dr. Lunz served as Director of the Bears Bluff Laboratories from 1945 to 1969, and also served as Director of the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Department's Division of Commercial Fisheries from 1959 to 1969. His work covered the broad spectrum of marine ecology, and from the beginning his purposes and the purposes of the Laboratory were to develop and conserve the natural resources of South Carolina through education, study and research. In this respect, he and his staff made significant contributions to the study of pond-raised shrimp, oysters and finfish (mariculture); however, most interest and excitement was centered around the shrimp project. Finally, Dr. Lunz began to devote himself more and more to seeking protection of South Carolina's marshlands and estuarine environment. His long years of study had revealed that these were most important elements of our marine resources and were vital to the continued prosperity of our commercial and sport fisheries.

The research activities to be conducted at the new center will be under the leadership of Dr. Edwin B. Joseph, who is the Director of Marine Research and Education. Dr. Joseph previously served as Assistant Director of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and brings to South Carolina and the Marine Resources Center outstanding academic and research credentials. "I am pleased and encouraged by the very active scientific and commercial interest in South Carolina's marine resources, and I believe a cooperative effort by all these interests will achieve further gains in both the utilization and conservation of our marine environment", Dr. Joseph said.

Although the research building is scheduled for completion at the end of January, the actual ceremonies honoring Dr. Lunz will be held later when the entire Marine Resources Center is dedicated.

BANG! BANG! YOU'RE DEAD

On the morning of January 3rd at approximately 10:00 AM a shotgun blast ripped the air. Just as suddenly, three buckshot pellets ripped through the wing, neck and body of a soaring bald eagle. Eyes squinched shut in pain he plummets to the earth.

Somewhere a gun slinger, certainly not a sportsman or a hunter, is thinking about "that killer bird" he got.

The old wives tale about predatory birds still prevails and many farmers, ranchers, etc. continue to believe that their livestock are in grave danger. All the laws in the world protecting hawks and eagles won't change this, they can only provide punishment for the offender. If we are to really protect our predatory birds, if we are to really insure their continued presence we must educate continually. We do this not by preaching against the hunter but by speaking eloquently about the eagle and other predatory birds. Please, become informed and speak out, the eagle can't.

WFR

AUDUBON COMMENTS

(The following is an excerpt from a speech given by Elvis J. Stahr, President, National Audubon Society at the Annual Audubon Dinner, New York Hilton Hotel)

"Pressures of population and technology are threatening an increasing variety of wildlife with slow decline and, in some cases, rapid extinction. Many wild animals are being wantonly killed in the name of predator control, others, not even considered game by true sportsmen, are killed by some people for what they call sport. Not only eagles and hawks and falcons, but many other birds are falling victim to rising levels of hard pesticides in the environment. Whales and other creatures of the sea are in grave trouble, in some cases because of just plain greed. The total list of endangered and declining species is heart-breakingly long.

And in the long run, if current trends continue, those threatened with direct killing or indirect poisoning will be joined by even greater numbers that are threatened with loss of a place to live -- habitat, in short. A recent estimate by the Department of Agriculture is that 1.5 million acres of land are being gobbled up each year in the United States alone by housing developments, factories, parking lots, highways and the like.

Much of our shrinking wilderness, even areas which are officially under study for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness System, is being invaded by loggers and miners. Channelization is drastically altering the life systems and destroying the beauty of many of our streams.

Crucially important wetlands are still being dredged, filled and otherwise destroyed. Our great public lands--one third of the entire acreage of the United States and the property of all Americans--are permitted, even encouraged, by our own government not just to be used, but in demonstrable ways to be abused by a variety of private interests.

Automobiles continue to be the major polluter of urban air, but we continue to spend vastly more on highways than on improved urban transit systems.

In case after case, organic products have given way to synthetic ones which cannot be readily assimilated by nature, and so become another major pollutant.

The ever-growing demands for energy pose especially serious threats to the environment. Unwise siting of power plants, carelessness in the handling of petroleum, strip mining on slopes that cannot be reclaimed and failure to reclaim those that can be, are examples of practices which are frequently sought to be justified in the name of energy needs--but which actually are not necessary to any sane solution of the energy problem. Part of the energy problem even stems from the fact that wasteful consumption of energy continues to be encouraged by some public and private agencies which scream loudest about energy shortages. Productive use of energy is, of course, necessary; squandering it is not, and when the cost is polluted air, polluted waters and the destruction of natural areas, we have a real problem.

The foregoing are but a few of the areas where man's interactions with his environment are having consequences that are undesirable--or worse. In Pogo's words: "We have met the enemy, and he is us." But it should at least be added that some of us are striving seriously, persistently and nowadays sometimes successfully to make the enemy see the error and the danger of his ways. We need help....."