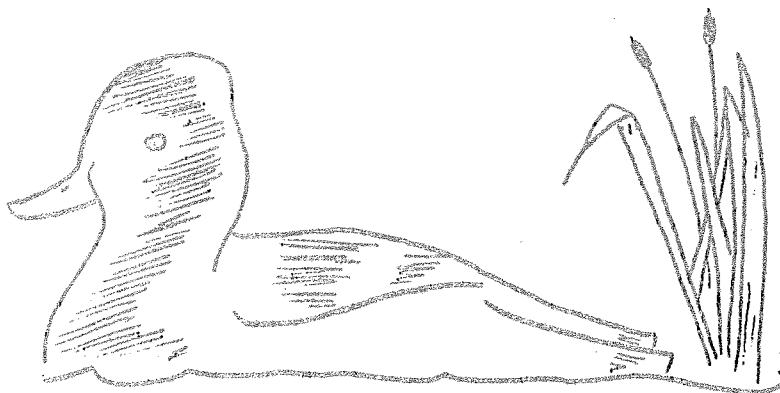


# The Lesser Squawk



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## OFFICERS

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## FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

On Tuesday, February 10, the monthly meeting of the Society will be held at 8:00 p.m. at the Charleston Museum. Bill Anderson will present an illustrated lecture on "Fishes of the Western Atlantic."

An all-day field trip will be held on February 15. The ultimate destination of the participants will be the old rice field known as Little Hell Hole Reservoir. However, Julian Harrison and Norman Chamberlain will lead the group by way of Clement's Ferry Road, Middleburg Plantation, and Huger Park. Participants will assemble at the Mount Pleasant Piggly Wiggly at 7 a.m.

## OBSERVATIONS

Mrs. Julius F. Holbrook reports that on January 10 Mr. Paul Bonney saw on the mud bank between the yacht basin and the Coast Guard station several Turnstones, Willets, and Buffleheads, and four Avocets.

On January 7, Miss Frances W. Brewster observed a Western Kingbird in a bush in front of her apartment.

On January 31, Mr. Francis Barrington saw a male and a female Purple Finch in his yard.

On January 17, an oil-soaked Razor-billed Auk was found on Edisto Beach by Roger Lambert. A strong onshore wind which had prevailed for some time apparently had washed it ashore. Despite efforts to save it, this northern counterpart of the Penguin died within a few hours.

## BIRD MOVEMENT IN FEBRUARY

Arrivals

6 Purple Martin

8 White-tailed Kite

28 Evening Grosbeak

Departures

3 White-fronted Goose

13 Cinnamon Teal

? Dovekie

Casuals and Accidentals

Harlequin Duck

Long-tailed Jaeger

Parula Warbler

## WINDOW-SILL BIRDING

My Baltimore Oriole is back! On January 21, he put in his appearance on my bedroom window-sill where the feeder is located. This was just about a week later than last year, but I had been hearing one of his call-notes which is not unlike that of the robin. He zeros in, looks cautiously around in every possible direction, daintily picks up a piece of chopped date or uncooked prune, then seeks privacy to enjoy it in the foliage of the live oak tree close by. This is taking place, not in the suburbs, but in a busy area of town near the construction site of the Medical University Dental School.

Another customer at my feeder is a Catbird. His tactics are bolder, for while he, too, is cautious, he lands with an air of assurance, selects a morsel, and consumes it on location. A Brown Thrasher, a pair of Cardinals, numerous White-throated Sparrows, and the usual Blue Jays and English Sparrows are regular visitors at the feeder.

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, several times lately, has been working the trunk of a small pine not more than 25 feet away.

Lastly, 1970 has also brought into close view a Ruby-crowned Kinglet as, on at least two occasions, it flitted its nervous way through the branches of the oak.

Next best to occupying the top of the tree with the birds is the privilege of watching them from a second-story window just a few feet from the nearest branch.

-Elizabeth D. Simons

## WINTER BIRD COUNT

The annual winter bird count disclosed a total of 144 species in the area north of Mount Pleasant on December 27, 1969. According to E. Burnham Chamberlain, who was in charge of the count, an estimated 36,180 birds were observed by the participants. Shore birds, probably driven south by an unusually cold northern winter, were especially numerous this year.

## THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

Sky-watchers who live in the Charleston area are especially privileged, each February, to observe a phenomenon which is not visible north of this latitude. Canopus, one of the stars of the southern hemisphere, appears briefly above the southern horizon, as it reaches its highest point north. Although second only to Sirius in brilliance, one would have to travel much farther south in order to see its real glory. Because it describes such a low arc above the local horizon, much of its light is absorbed in the haze near the earth's surface; therefore, an observer who discovers it for the first time experiences a genuine thrill. The best vantage-point for one desiring to do so would be the beach, or some other place without obstructions along the southern horizon, and away from bright lights. When Sirius reaches the meridian, that point exactly between east and west, Orion will be standing upright just west of it. By looking directly downward from Sirius, Canopus may be located, appearing as a rather faint orange-gold object in an area where few stars are seen. Orion's sword, three faint stars "hanging" from the belt, holds a treat for telescope owners who will focus on the middle star. The "fuzziness" surrounding it will be resolved into a nebula of breath-taking beauty.

Castor and Pollux, the brightest stars in Gemini, the Twins, may be seen nearly overhead to the east, and Capella, in Auriga, the Charioteer, to the west of the zenith.

In the early evenings, Mars and Saturn may still be seen in the southwestern sky. At the beginning of the month, Mars sets about 10:00 p.m., and at the end, about an hour earlier. Saturn follows about two hours later, just as Jupiter rises in the east. Mercury is now in the early morning sky. During the first week, it rises about 5:30 a.m., then gradually, as the month advances, it draws nearer to the approaching sun.

"ECLIPSE OF THE SUN" is the topic of the program on February 16 at the Charleston Museum Planetarium at 8:00 p.m.

-Elizabeth D. Simons

## MAGNOLIA GARDENS FIELD TRIP

On the still, mild morning of January 18, several members of the Society, walking quietly through a grove of trees, approached the freshwater marsh at Magnolia Gardens. Suddenly powerful wings smote the air and a flock of Canada Geese honked their way skyward. As the ripples died away on the black surface of the lagoon, small groups of ducks and coots nervously paddled away, each individual gliding noiselessly at the point of a silk-smooth angle in the satin water.

A sharp eye spotted a Fulvous Tree Duck, and later several Canvasbacks, among the more common Shovelers, Ringnecks, Teal, Wood, and Ruddy Ducks. Flocks of grey, noisy coots paddled in and out of the cattail islands. Just above the winter-grey rustling stalks, marsh hawks tirelessly coursed. Now and then, on rafts of floating pond weed, a Common Gallinule was seen walking and pecking in its solitary fashion. Honks, squeaks, and blats filled the air as new flocks were disturbed near the shore and pattered their way across the water and into the air.

And, perhaps inescapably, there came the thought that only a short tick ago on the clock of time, before the coming of earth's highest and lowest species, all of our waterways may have approached the teeming life of this small preserve.

-Roger D. Lambert