

The Lesser Squawk



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FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

The next regular monthly meeting of the Society will be on Tuesday, February 9, 1971, at 8:00 p.m. at the Charleston Museum. Margie Harrison will present a planetarium show entitled "Winter Skies." She will also discuss the planetarium in general and the Museum's plans for the planetarium.

On Sunday, February 14, Ted Beckett will lead a short field trip to Magnolia Gardens. The rendezvous will be at the Charleston Museum at 7:00 a.m.

OBSERVATIONS

D.M. Forsythe, Assistant Professor of Biology at the Citadel, reports the following observations:

- Nov. 10, 1970. A dead Osprey, now in the Citadel Collection, was found at Church Creek, James Island, by S.A. Wedman.
- Jan. 12-14, 1971. Three immature White Pelicans were seen at the Citadel boat slip by D.M. Forsythe and B.J. Kelly, Jr.
- Jan. 18, 1971. A Red-throated Loon on Sullivan's Island and a Black-headed Gull at Breach Inlet were observed by D.M. Forsythe.

A WINTER RECORD OF THE AMERICAN REDSTART FOR CHARLESTON, S.C.

On 1 January 1971 at 1030 hours, while observing birds in Hampton Park, adjacent to The Citadel campus, Charleston, S.C., my attention was drawn to a small bird feeding in a Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*). Upon examination, it proved to be a female American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*). I was able to observe all field marks in good light for about five minutes before the bird flew away. That afternoon I observed the Redstart for ten minutes as it foraged with a flock of Ruby-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus calendula*). Subsequent attempts to locate the bird were unsuccessful.

The normal winter range for the American Redstart does not extend further north than Cuba and Puerto Rico (Am. Ornith. Union Check-list of North American Birds 5th ed., pp. 518-519, 1957). Although there are several winter records from southern Florida (Audubon Field Notes 16(3): 324, 1962; 20(3): 415, 1966) and Louisiana (Lowery, Louisiana Birds, p. 556, 1955), the Charleston bird represents the northernmost winter record for this species.

-Dennis M. Forsythe
Dept. of Biology, The Citadel

THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

The February skies present the greatest splendor of the year on every clear night. The Milky Way, with its assembly of brilliant stars in the foreground, dominates the scene from northwest to southeast throughout the hours of darkness; the Big Dipper is high in the northeast, giving infallible guidance toward the North Star by means of the Pointers in the bowl; and the constellation, Leo, the forerunner of spring, is just above the eastern horizon as soon as twilight has ended.

The greatest spectacle to be observed this February will be a total eclipse of the moon. On February 9, the Full Moon will rise just ahead of Leo, and at midnight, it will reach the meridian. Fifty-two minutes later, the passage of the moon into the deep shadow, (the umbra), of the earth will begin. The "nick", which will first appear on the east side of the lunar face, will gradually increase, causing the moon to appear as an ever diminishing crescent. Instead of being lost to sight, however, the moon will take on a coppery hue, enabling observers to see its spherical shape suspended in space. The period of totality, when the moon is submerged in the earth's shadow, will last from 2:03 until 3:26 a.m. An idea of the size of the earth may be gained from this fact, when one realizes that the speed of the moon, at a distance of 240,000 miles as it orbits the earth, is more than 2000 miles per hour. After the bright crescent reappears on the side opposite to that of its disappearance, it will steadily increase in size until 4:37 a.m. when, once more, the Full Moon will dim the light of all other celestial objects. Observers are reminded that February is the month when Canopus, the second-brightest star in the heavens, may be seen. The best time to do so will be about the middle of the month, between 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. Sirius will then be on the meridian. The best vantage point will be an open area away from bright lights, preferably the beach, or a creek or river bank. After locating Sirius, follow a line straight down from it to the southern horizon. Canopus may be recognized by its orange color. Although it is a first magnitude star when seen from the Southern Hemisphere, much of its brilliance is absorbed by the atmosphere near the horizon, so that it does not appear very bright from this latitude.

Saturn sets at 1:00 a.m. on February first, and two hours earlier by the 28th. First Mars, and then Jupiter, will rise between 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. at the beginning of the month, but by the end, Jupiter will precede Mars by more than an hour, rising at

that time shortly after midnight. Venus, the most brilliant of the planets, rises between 4:00 and 4:30 a.m. throughout the month.

The hours between midnight and dawn, therefore, hold "the jackpot" for hardy sky-watchers during February, but there is also much to reward those who do their observing earlier in the evenings.

-Elizabeth D. Simons

JANUARY FIELD TRIP

The Santee National Wildlife Refuge, located on Lakes Marion and Moultrie in Clarendon and Berkeley counties respectively, has as its primary objective the provision of winter habitat and protection for some 35,000 Canada Geese, 100,000 ducks, and 15,000 Coots. On Sunday, January 17, 1971, about 30 CNHS members and their guests discovered that this and other objectives are being accomplished admirably by Refuge Manager Mel Evans and his staff.

Upon arrival everyone gathered in refuge headquarters for a discussion by Mr. Evans who explained the purposes and activities of the Santee Refuge and outlined the itinerary for the day. The Society is indebted to Mr. Evans for a most informative and rewarding tour. He certainly deserves our warmest thanks and appreciation for making possible what was undoubtedly the Society's best outing of the current season.

Despite a rather brisk, cold, overcast day, nearly 70 species of birds were observed. Although access into the best area for observing ducks was prevented by a hunt in progress during our visit, we were treated to the sight of several thousand "honkers" feeding in ponds and fields near the headquarters unit, and this alone would certainly have "made" our day. With the exception of a few Blue Geese and a couple of Snows, all of these birds were Canadas. Potatoe Creek impoundment, south of Davis Station, Clarendon County, produced the most interesting "find" of the day. A male European Widgeon was singled out of a raft of several hundred Baldpate by Dennis Forsythe and observed by everyone present on the afternoon leg of the trip. This species is listed as rare in winter on the official refuge checklist, and most assuredly was the highpoint of the day.

"Some recent developments that may hamper or seriously interfere with the accomplishment of the Santee Refuge's objectives are currently under study by your executive committee. Further details will be presented at the February meeting and published in future issues of the "Lesser Squawk".

-Julian R. Harrison, III

CAROLINA BIRD CLUB MID-WINTER TRIP

If the comments of numerous CBC and CNHS members are any indication, the Carolina Bird Club's mid-winter field trip to the Charleston area was a resounding success. Your President takes this opportunity to thank those individuals whose efforts contributed significantly to the meeting's success, most particularly Mr. John Henry Dick and Mr. Edward von Siebold Dingle who offered their homes and plantations for the two Saturday all-day trips, and who could not have been more gracious hosts. Mr. Dick was also the featured speaker at the Saturday evening session, and his illustrated

talk on the birds of East Africa was enjoyed by all. I thank also Mr. Stanley Langston whose excellent slides of South Carolina birds were the subject of enthusiastic comments by virtually all who attended the Friday evening session.

Many others contributed greatly to the meeting's success. Edwin Blicht and Dennis Forsythe led the Saturday trip to Middleburg Plantation and other areas. Mr. and Mrs. Ted Beckett hosted the Sunday morning trip to Magnolia Gardens and assisted with registration. Ted was also the leader of the Saturday trip to Dixie Plantation. Several CHNS members contributed their time to assist with registration, and still others stopped by to offer their assistance if required. To all of these individuals my heartfelt thanks and appreciation, especially Dr. and Mrs. I.S.H. Metcalf, Mrs. W.F. Robey, and Mrs. Jack Jagar. My sincere apologies to any whose names I may have inadvertently omitted. Finally, I especially thank Dr. E. Milby Burton and the staff of the Charleston Museum for the provision of coffee and refreshments during registration, for providing meeting rooms and janitorial service, and for otherwise making this meeting possible.

A total of about 129 species was observed on the two Saturday field trips, the most notable being a pair of Bald Eagles seen on the trip to Middleburg Plantation. Further details concerning the CBC's mid-winter visit to our area will undoubtedly appear in a future issue of The Chat, the organization's official publication.

—Julian R. Harrison, III