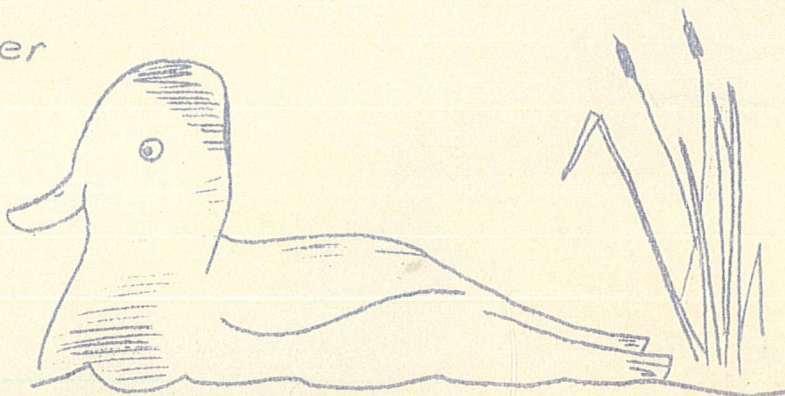


The Lesser Squawk



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EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

At a meeting of the executive board on June 9, Mr. Robert Manns, who represents National Audubon Society, was present. Mr. Manns' purpose in attending the meeting was to present in more detail than had been explained previously reasons why the Charleston Natural History Society should become a chapter of National Audubon Society. Peter Manigault, who in addition to being a member of our Society is on the board of directors of National Audubon, and John Henry Dick participated in the discussion between Mr. Manns and the executive board.

Mr. Manns presented the following reasons for our Society to become affiliated with National Audubon:

1. The country surrounding Charleston has an extremely interesting diversity of habitats and environment, but our rapid population and industrial growth threatens disaster to many of these areas.
2. There is now no local organization with dedicated people and know-how which is fully committed to preservation of these threatened areas.
3. In other communities local organizations in league with National Audubon Society have successfully defended threatened areas.
4. In today's fast-changing (or perhaps it should be called fast-deteriorating) environment, accomplishment of worthwhile objectives is much easier if an organization can show strength in numbers.
5. Charleston Natural History Society, as a chapter of National Audubon Society, would find an increase in membership easier to obtain.
6. Through National Audubon Society funds are available to local chapters for accomplishment of worthwhile projects.

7. National Audubon Society can and does come to the aid of local chapters when the need for environmental protection is severe enough.

In response to questions by the executive committee, Mr. Manns stated that:

1. As a chapter of National Audubon Society, we still would retain the name Charleston Natural History Society.
2. Anyone who did not wish to join National Audubon Society could still be an associate member, pay the usual two dollar dues, receive the "Lesser Squawk", and attend meetings and field trips. This arrangement recognizes the fact that many out-of-town members already belong to an Audubon chapter but still wish to keep up with Charleston Natural History Society activities.
3. After one year of provisional status as an Audubon chapter, CNHS would become a full-fledged chapter. At that time CNHS would have to bring with it 35 members who are not now members of National Audubon.

Mr. Manns explained that National Audubon is not looking for new chapters merely to swell its membership lists. It is looking for chapters that recognize the necessity for commitment to the ecological needs of their local environments. It feels that this commitment should be the basis for cooperation between a local group and the national organization.

After extended discussion with Mr. Manns the executive board voted unanimously to consider his proposals. After further discussion at the next executive board meeting, the pros and cons of these proposals will be presented at a meeting of the Society.

OBSERVATIONS

On June 6, Mr. J.V. Bell, a mycologist at the Clemson Experiment Station, found a pigmy sperm whale. It was stranded in the surf on the Isle of Palms. Mr. Bell tried several times to push it to deeper water. Finally the whale swam away. It was estimated to be 6 feet long and to weigh 300 pounds.

At approximately 12:30 p.m. on June 7, the Julian Harrison family saw 6 swallow-tailed kites and about 10 Mississippi kites at Wambaw Bridge in Francis Marion National Forest. The Mississippi were flying higher than the swallow-tails and they may not all have been adults.

BACKYARD WOODPECKERS

Have you ever washed dishes while looking out of the window or ironed, glancing over your shoulder every few minutes? I have been doing this for the last month in order to watch a liveoak tree, about 40 feet outside our kitchen window. It's a nice tree, the sprawling kind that boys and cats like to climb and birds enjoy--from the grackles in the top to green herons on the lowest branch which dips into the marsh. The spring activity began in earnest on March 7 when a male red-bellied woodpecker was observed digging seriously on a dead limb about 8 inches in diameter. Soon sawdust could be seen on the branch below.

After he worked most of the week, the hole was big enough for all of him except his tail. But on March 12, starlings decided this was just the hole for them and battled the woodpecker to the ground twice. The woodpeckers seemed to give up and flew away, but in a few days they came back to work. The starlings hadn't really moved in. The male woodpecker did most of the digging, but the female was usually nearby. Both of them ate great quantities of suet in the feeder on the next tree. By the 17th the male was able to get in the hole and stick his head out. The starlings occasionally showed interest and fought the woodpeckers going in and out of the hole. Once a red-bellied and a starling both went in the hole and stayed for several minutes; then the woodpecker flew away. The woodpeckers then apparently lost interest in this site and were not seen working at the hole for a couple of weeks, but came regularly to the suet. On April 11, both woodpeckers were back and working hard. One seemed to be in almost constant attendance. The hole was quite deep. Occasionally one of the woodpeckers would go around on the other side of the branch and tap opposite the entrance hole. They were seen to mate twice on April 15. They were also more aggressive toward the starlings. The female woodpecker frequented the suet feeder the morning of the 16th, but paid no attention to the nest hole. Later that day we discovered that the hole had gone clear through the branch so that daylight could be seen. From then on the woodpeckers showed no interest in it, but the starlings don't seem to mind the double entry and are there most of the time.

Our interest is in the fact that the woodpeckers worked off and on for six weeks at this nest site and were not successful. Will they have to start all over again on another hole? Or have they been working on an alternate place in their absences? What does the female do with eggs if the nest hole is not ready?

-Fog Metcalf

THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

Even without Daylight Saving Time, Sky-watchers are aware that June is the month of the shortest nights for celestial observations. Summer arrives on June 21 in the northern hemisphere, when the earth, with its North Pole steadfastly tilted toward the North Star, reaches the southernmost point of its orbit around the sun. For this reason, the sun rises in the northeast, rides high at noon, and sets in the northwest, giving at least four more hours of daylight than it did last December.

In the evening twilight, Mars may be discerned near the horizon. It will set in the northwest about 8:30 o'clock. In the same general direction, but considerably higher, Venus should be visible even before daylight ends, and at mid-month, it will set about 10:00 p.m. As Venus descends toward the northwest at nightfall, Jupiter may be observed moving upward in the southeast, finally reaching the meridian when Venus disappears.

Summer presents fewer first-magnitude stars than winter, but the constellations at this season have a soft beauty of their own. Leo, the Lion, is now steadily moving toward the northwestern horizon, and by midnight, will have disappeared from view. Following Leo is Virgo, containing the bright star, Spica. Jupiter, located to the southeast of Spica, far outshines it in brilliance. Almost directly east of Spica is the central star of the faint constellation, Libra, the Scales. Two other stars extend equidistant—one to the northeast and the other to the southeast—from the central one, and just a little imagination is required to recognize the carefully balanced scales.

By 8:00 p.m. in the middle of the month, one of the most beautiful of the summer constellations is completely in view above the southeastern horizon. This is Scorpius, the Scorpion. A graceful curve of stars, dominated by one of orange brilliance, represents the slender body and arching tail of the arachnid for which it was named, and at the head, two faint stars, one at either side, represent the claws.

Arcturus, in Bootes, is now quite high, reaching a point nearly overhead when Jupiter is on the meridian. At this time, Corona, the Crown should be located without any difficulty, to the east of Bootes.

Lyra, the Lyre, containing the brilliant blue-white star, Vega, is now well in view a little north of east. Since most of the stars in this little constellation are quite faint, it may be difficult at first to discern the group, but perseverance of the observer will be rewarded by the beauty revealed. Vega is the apex of a small triangle with two very faint stars, and "dangling" southeastward from the lower one, three others form a diamond.

Early risers with a good view of the east will be able to see two planets in the morning sky. Saturn rises about three hours before the sun, and Mercury, about an hour later.

Sky-watchers are reminded that the hours referred to in these articles are all of Standard Time.

-Elizabeth D. Simons

SPRING BIRD COUNT

Full details of the spring bird count, held this year on May 2, 1970, will appear in the Chat and Audubon Field Notes. It may be noted here that the count was a moderately successful one, especially in comparison to last year's, despite a rather poor turn-out. Not enough observers were present to cover some areas adequately, although those who did participate worked very hard and are to be highly commended for a job well done. The number of species observed was 139 (112 in 1969); the number of individuals 4,059 (2,240 in 1969). Individual count honors go to Edwin Blich and Mrs. R.H. Coleman who observed 97 species (including both species of Kite), and to Ted Beckett and William McIntosh with 91 species. A Worm-eating Warbler was seen by Terry Moore, Bill and Robby Sonzogni, and an Ovenbird was observed by Ted Metcalf, Tom Metcalf, and Bob Laval.

-Julian R. Harrison, III

MAY FIELD TRIP

Fifty species of birds, including both Mississippi and Swallow-tailed Kites, were observed on the trip to Wambaw Creek, May 17, 1970. A disappointingly small group of CNHS members proceeded directly to the area, Elmwood Wildlife Center in the Waterhorn Hunting Unit of the Francis Marion National Forest. Unlike previous trips, no interim stops were made. At the deforested area near the gate, a brief stop yielded numerous species including Prairie Warblers, Brown-headed Nuthatches, Summer Tanagers, Yellow-breasted Chats, and White Ibis. The majority of the morning hours were spent hiking along forest service road 211 southwest of Elmwood Center.