

Bits & Briefs

McAlhany Preserve Wish List:

We're tremendously proud to be custodians of our McAlhany property. To pursue current and future projects, maintain and improve the facilities, McAlhany Chair Joe Cockrell has assembled the following wish list:

- bat boxes
- crushed rock (for entrance drive)
- drip torch
- garden hose
- golf cart or ATV
- paint (interior and exterior)
- bench, park-type
- tree marker paint, blue
- railroad ties
- refrigerator, small
- rocking chairs
- rug
- sofa
- steel cable, galvanized
- sign, sandblasted wood
- surveillance camera,
 - outdoor, digital, motion-activated
- swing
- tractor and disc
- utility trailer
- weed / brush cutter, gasoline powered
- wildflower seed (native to southeast)

If you have questions about exactly what we need, or you think you can help by donating any of these items, please contact Joe: at cockrelljoe@cs.com, or 843-607-1070.

More @ McAlhany Preserve:

Want to get out to McAlhany and see the property? We're holding a volunteer work day at McAlhany on Saturday, March 11th, and Julian Harrison will be leading the second in an ongoing series of fieldtrips to survey the plant and animal life found on the property on Sunday, March 26th.

See page 3 for details on these and other upcoming outings.

South Carolina's Nesting Seabirds Topic of Current Politics, March Lecture

Only five of South Carolina's barrier islands are still known to support seabird nesting. State environmental officials, concerned about a steep decline in the number of nesting pelicans in our state over the last fifteen years, are considering banning all boat landings on three local islands already designated as "state heritage preserve" sites – Bird Key, Deveaux Bank and Crab Bank. Although current regulations do close the nesting areas on each island from April 1st through October 15th of each year, footprints and dog tracks criss-cross the nesting areas – despite the warning signs and rope barriers around the nest sites.

» Join Felicia Sanders, coastal biologist for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, as she talks about the state's breeding seabirds, research currently being conducted and the policy changes under consideration, as well as what we can do to help protect them. She will speak at our Thursday, March 9 meeting, starting at 7 p.m. with a 6:30 p.m. reception, in the second floor auditorium of the Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun Street, downtown Charleston.

Our coasts are home to tens of thousands of nesting birds, including brown pelicans, laughing gulls, black skimmers, several species of terns and plovers. Some of our barrier islands are also important breeding habitat for tri-colored herons and snowy and great egrets. Two kinds of shorebirds—American oystercatchers and Wilson's plovers—also nest on our beaches.

But increased disturbance from people and dogs has caused some seabird populations to plummet: Brown pelican populations have reached the lowest levels seen in our state since before the ban on DDT. Adjoining states have aggressive seabird colony protection programs in place and are experiencing increased populations and nesting success rates with some of the same species that are declining within South Carolina.



Nesting seabird colonies are very fragile. While it may seem harmless if a dog or a person enters the colony, if birds are forced off their nests for as little as 20 minutes, eggs can actually cook on the hot sand. And in a tern colony, a dog can separate chicks from parents' protection, exposing them to the attacks of fish crows and other predators. Even kite flying—an activity that may seem harmless—can seriously disrupt breeding because the seabirds panic at an unknown object flying overhead.

Mark Your Calnedars Now:

Because we compete for the use of the Library auditorium, not ALL of our lectures can be on Thursday. When we can't schedule the second Thursday of the month, we try for the second Wednesday of the month – In March we are meeting on Thursday the 9th. The Lesser Squawk schedule may not always provide a reminder in the days before a talk, so please – Mark your calendars early and take special notice of whether we're meeting on a Wednesday or a Thursday.

Symposium to Honor Bachman, and Explore Audubon Connection

The Rev. John Bachman (1790-1874) was a noted Lutheran clergyman who, in Charleston, dared to teach and minister to African-Americans when it was against social norms and a violation of the law. Bachman served St. John's Lutheran Church as a beloved and visionary Lutheran pastor for 56 years, during which he wrote learned books and articles on wide-ranging topics from Martin Luther and the Reformation to animal taxonomy and human speciation.

Perhaps Bachman's most unexpected contribution came as an expert Low Country naturalist who befriended John James Audubon and had profound influence on this gifted painter of birds and wildlife.

Bachman's association with Audubon began on 17 October 1831, when Audubon visited Charleston to sell subscriptions to his monumental *Birds of North America*. The artist practically bumped into the pastor, became acquainted with Bachman's vast knowledge of flora and fauna, and immediately arranged to spend a month at the Bachman home on Rutledge Avenue (above), known for its animal menagerie and diverse but unkempt botanical collection. Out of this serendipitous encounter grew a friendship and collaboration seldom repeated in the annals of American science.

Together, the two men and their families created a magnificent three-volume set on *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*, a scientific and artistic work that introduced strange and wonderful frontier mammals such as the American Bison to an appreciative public here and abroad.

Registration for the John Bachman Symposium, 20-23 April 2006, at Newberry College, is now open; deadline for advance registration is 24 February 2006. On-site registration is not guaranteed and, if available, will require a 20% fee increase.

» For more information visit <http://www.johnbachman.org/>

9th Annual SC Native Plant Society Symposium Partners in Conservation – Preserving our Natural Heritage

The 9th Annual SCNPS Native Plant Symposium will be held April 21-23, 2006 in Charleston, at the College of Charleston, hosted by the Lowcountry chapter. This year's symposium promises to present an in depth look at conservation efforts around the state: Conservation partners will lend their passion and expertise in lectures on topics including; Using Prescribed Fire to Restore South Carolina's Fire Dependant Landscapes, The Science Behind Sweetgrass Conservation, and Habitat Restoration in a Carolina Bay. Participants will learn how historical events have shaped our current natural resources and what is occurring today to preserve the landscape. For an agenda and registration information please visit the SCNPS website: www.scnps.org.

Saturday, following an evening reception, keynote speaker, Lawrence Earley will take to the stage. Earley is a former editor of "Wildlife in North Carolina" magazine, a freelance writer, and photographer living in Raleigh, NC.

Sunday, the symposium will conclude with afternoon fieldtrips to local areas of interest. Participants may choose from 11 scheduled trips including; several trips throughout the Francis Marion National Forest, a canoe adventure along the Cooper River exploring rice fields, viewing native gardens at Mepkin Abbey, and visiting the new Birds of Prey Center. Transportation and lunch are included in the price of the symposium.

Shorebird Surveys Present Conservation Opportunity

The Charleston Audubon Society has agreed to partner with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in a project to conduct research and foster education about Piping Plovers in our state.

This shorebird species is Federally-listed as Endangered, and small numbers of the birds winter on beaches along the southern Atlantic seaboard – including the entire SC coast. Melissa Bimbi and Sid Mattock have submitted a grant proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (seeking funds from the Savannah-Santee-Pee Dee Resource Protection Fund), and our chapter has offered an in-kind contribution of 200 hours of volunteer time over two years to the project.

If you are interested in helping promote shorebird conservation in SC, and in particular the birds that use our local beaches, watch this space! We will be looking for volunteers to assist with both the research and education components of the work. Contact Andy Harrison at 795-6934 or parula23@aol.com if you'd like to help – thanks!

By the time you read this, the 2006 International Piping, Snowy and Wilson's Plover Winter Census will have been completed. Charleston Audubon Society members will be assisting in the survey. The 2006 results from Seabrook Island are particularly important because they may play a critical role in determining the fate of the controversial dog park being advocated on the north beach there by some Seabrook Town Council members.

Upcoming at Beidler Forest

Nightwalks –

Call 843-462-2150 for reservations:

- March 11, 6:00 p.m.
- April 8, 7:30 p.m.
- May 6, 8:30 p.m.

Earthday Swampology Day – April 22

Arrive by 2 p.m. for a family day of present and past uses of the swamp and hands-on scientific, nature-related activities and demonstrations. General boardwalk admission.

Wine and Warblers – April 28

5:30 to 7:30 p.m. starting times

Enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres as you stroll along the boardwalk with an expert bird guide. Groups of 10 will begin every 30 minutes. Call to reserve your starting time. \$25



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Upcoming Programs, Outings & Lowcountry Events

FIELDTRIPS & OUTINGS:

» SEWE - Wildlife Expo

» February 17-19, 2006

We'll have volunteers at our booth at the Southeast Wildlife Exposition. Meet a fascinating range of folks and tell them about our Charleston Audubon society. Contact Andy if you'd like to sign-up (by email at parula23@aol.com, or call 795-6934).

» McAlhany Flora/Fauna Survey

» Sunday, March 26, 2006, 7:30 a.m.

After a lapse of several years, Charleston Audubon has resumed monthly surveys of the fauna and flora of the McAlhany Nature Preserve under the guidance of Julian Harrison. Everyone's welcome, and no special expertise is needed.

Be prepared for these trips to last until mid or late afternoon (although you're welcome to leave early if you like). Bring water, lunch or snacks, binoculars, guides and cameras if you have them. Digital cameras may be especially helpful for quickly transferring photographs to our website where they can be organized and catalogued.

Meet Julian in the West Ashley Barnes and Noble parking lot directly behind the Burger King restaurant at 7:30 a.m. We'll carpool from there to the Preserve, a driving distance of about 60-65 miles, planning to arrive by 9:00 a.m. or before. Please contact Julian (843-795-1694 or harrisonj@cofc.edu) no later than Saturday, March 25, if you plan to participate.

» Bear Island & Donnelly WMAs

» March 4, 2006, 7:30 a.m.

Join Andy Harrison for some late winter/early spring birding at Bear Island and Donnelly Wildlife Management Areas in the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge. These two WMAs are well-known as refuges for wintering waterfowl (this year tundra swans have been plentiful at Bear Island, and a pair of

cackling geese were observed on numerous occasions in the vicinity of Mary's Pond), but they also offer a variety of upland habitats where in the past we have been treated to species such as Vesper and Fox Sparrows.

Meet Andy at 7:30 a.m. Saturday, March 4 in the Food Lion parking lot in Ravenel. Bring binoculars/scopes, field guides, water, food/snacks, sunscreen/insect repellent and weather-appropriate clothing.

Register with Andy at 795-6934 or by email at parula23@aol.com by Friday, March 3.

» McAlhany Workday

» Sat., March 11, 2006, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Joe Cockrell is organizing folks who'd like to give us a hand for a workday at McAlhany. We need to install wood duck nest boxes, hang gates, mark and clear trails, tidy the cabin, etc.

Please contact Joe if you'd like to join-in: email cockrelljoe@cs.com or phone (843) 607-1070. Depending on who is able to come we'll arrange to car-pool and/or adjust our timeline.

» Folly Island Beachwalk

» Sat., March 25, 2006, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Join Don Jones and explore the marshes and beaches of Folly Island in the Wal mart parking lot on Folly Rd at 7:30 a.m.. Bring all the usual stuff; binox, lunch, water etc. We should finish up by 1:30 or 2:00 p.m.

LECTURE SERIES:

Thursday, March 9, 6:30 p.m.

» Felicia Sanders, SC DNR

» South Carolina's Seabirds

Join Felicia Sanders, coastal biologist for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, as she talks about the state's breeding seabirds and discusses some of the research currently being conducted by scientists. You can also learn about the threats to these birds and what you can do to help protect them. (See story, pg. 1)

Wednesday, April 12, 6:30 pm

» Meg Hoyle

» Sea Turtle Conservation

Meg leads the Botany Community Conservation Sea Turtle Project, one of the longest running loggerhead sea turtle protection projects in the state of South Carolina. The Botany turtle program is a partnership between The Nature Conservancy and the Edisto community. Our chapter has supported their efforts.

Meg will talk about the turtles and the effort that goes into organizing beach patrols – Patrols begin in mid-May and last until the final nest hatches in late September or early October – and educational outreach, all designed to save these amazing animals.

Thursday, May 11, 6:30 p.m.

» Doreen Cubie

» Attracting Hummingbirds

Join hummingbird bander Doreen Cubie to learn about South Carolina's year-round hummers and how you can attract them to your garden.

Doreen is affiliated with the Hummer/Bird Study Group (HBSG - www.hummingbirdsplus.org), a nonprofit organization currently involved in a long-term study of the hummingbirds wintering in the southeastern states.

Besides telling you how she catches those hummingbirds and how small those bands are (5,500 to an ounce), Doreen will talk about favorite hummingbird plants and also look at the life history of hummingbirds.

Directions to McAlhany:

The McAlhany preserve is located in upper Dorchester County on the Edisto River, about an hour's drive from downtown: 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.)

The LESSER SQUAWK

The Charleston Audubon Society
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The Charleston Audubon Society — a SC chapter of the National Audubon Society since 1970, founded as the Charleston Natural History Society in 1905, and serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties — is a nonprofit environmental organization that actively promotes awareness, appreciation and conservation of the natural environment through educational programs, field trips, conservation projects, sponsored research and social activities. Learn more online at www.CharlestonAudubon.org.

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Checks payable to **National Audubon Society**. Include our chapter code on your check: U-51 7XCH