

Bits & Briefs

New Chapter Website:

This Fall we are developing a new website at a new web address – www.CharlestonAudubon.org.

The process has only just begun, but in time we hope to offer a comprehensive site with local travel and birding information, educational materials, trip reports and photo galleries as well as online access to *The Lesser Squawk* and calendar information.

New Logo Development:

Keep an eye on the *Squawk* and the website – this Fall we'll demo several ideas for a new chapter logo: just as the Great Egret and Audubon logotype (as seen on the mailing face of the newsletter) identify the National Audubon, we're working to establish a new visual identity for ourselves.

Anyone who would like to contribute artwork or ideas please contact us via email:

» logo@charlestonaudubon.org



We Want You! Volunteer Sign-up Meeting:

We all belong to the Audubon for a reason, and hopefully we all want to see our chapter, now 100 years old, continue to educate and foster an interest in birds and Charleston's natural history for another 100 years.

We need help. Whether you've been active in the past or you are a brand new member, we ask you to think about helping the chapter now.

Sound scary? Its not. There are many small jobs that need to be done – making phone calls to welcome new members – recording meeting minutes – gathering news for the website and newsletter – or helping with fundraising, publicity or special events.

And we're open to new ideas too. Have a great idea how we can reach school children? Or how to recruit new members? Come share your ideas!

- » Please join us. We're meeting about 8 p.m.,
- » after Dr. Porcher's talk at the library on
- » Wednesday, September 14th.

Can't make it? Please call Tom (875-3445) or Steve (406-2061).

September Lecture on Carolina Bays Followed by Volunteer Discussion

This Wednesday, September 14, our speaker is Dr. Richard Porcher. His topic will be *Isolated Wetlands and the Restoration of a Carolina Bay*. We meet in the second floor auditorium of the main branch of the Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun Street in Charleston. Our lectures are free, and open to all Audubon members, guests and to the general public. We gather at 6:30 p.m. for a reception and speakers will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Carolina bays are isolated depressions, elliptical in shape, that are abundant throughout the southeastern Coastal Plain. Of the many mysterious bays which pockmark the Carolina lowcountry, only about three dozen remain close to their original condition as natural oases for varied or rare flora and fauna—most have been ditched, drained, and no longer function as wetlands.

Dr. Porcher purchased a tract of land in Clarendon County with a 7-acre Carolina bay that had been drained and planted in slash pine. Once he determined that the original community was a depression meadow—a globally ranked rare community—he began to restore the area. His lecture will be about isolated wetlands in general, and Carolina bays in more detail, including his restoration effort.

After Dr. Porcher's talk we invite all interested members to stay for a discussion about our chapter's activities and our need for volunteers. Could you help just a 1–2 hours a month? A few familiar faces have been working very hard to keep our chapter active, but they need help – See Bits+Briefs (this page) for more details.

Buy Seed, Sell Seed in Fall Fundraiser

Our annual birdseed sale is a good chance for you to help the chapter raise money while getting excellent seed to stock your feeders this Fall and Winter. You may find cheaper seed at discount stores, but you only get what you pay for: Our sale offers premium-quality seed thru *Wild Birds Unlimited!* and raises important monies for our local Audubon Society.

Use the enclosed form to place your order(s)—and make sure it is post-marked by October 15. If you can sell some seed to your friends, coworkers or neighbors, please do. You can duplicate the order form and let others place their own orders, or you can place a large order and then distribute the seed yourself. Extra order forms can be downloaded as PDFs online at www.CharlestonAudubon.org, an additional form will be included in the October *Squawk*, and copies will be available at the September and October membership meetings.

Pick-up is at the area Wild Birds Unlimited store that you select on the order form—in either Mount Pleasant or West Ashley—during the ten days from Friday, November 4 thru Sunday the 13th. Contact sale organizer, Mike Hutchinson (h:884-7746, w:5293486, mhutchinson15@comcast.net), with any questions you have about this year's sale.

If You Save It, They Will Come...

by Andy Harrison

Where were you when you heard the news? I was working at the Savannah River Site and first learned about the rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker on the evening of April 27, 2005. At the time it seemed too fantastic to be true, but the next day I was able to download the article in Scienceexpress ("Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) Persists in Continental North America," Fitzpatrick *et al.*, April 28 2005) that laid out the evidence for the find. For over a year teams led by representatives of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology had secretly scoured a section of the "Big Woods" region of eastern Arkansas where a kayaker and avid birder named Gene Sparling had observed a probable Ivory-bill in February 2004. They were able to obtain brief video footage and multiple sightings of at least one bird that confirmed Sparling's claim. Recently released audio recordings of likely Ivory-bills have also helped convince skeptics in the scientific community.

Detection of a living Ivory-billed Woodpecker is a tremendously exciting story, and something that many of us probably never dreamed possible. Now that it has happened, it gives us hope that other lost species might yet be found (perhaps Bachman's Warbler?). Many questions remain to be answered with respect to the Ivory-bill – for example, what is the size of the population in the "Big Woods?" Are there relict populations present in suitable habitat in other states, perhaps even in SC? As someone mentioned in a message on the Carolinabirds list-serv, it would be terribly ironic if we were just in time to locate the very last individual. That seems unlikely, but until more is learned about the status of the Ivory-bill, this "first contact" population (however large or small) must be protected against disturbance – not least from birders eager to add an Ivory-bill to their life list. TNC, the state of Arkansas and the US Fish and Wildlife Service have been protecting land along the White and Cache Rivers in the "Big Woods" for years. Since the initial sighting, at least \$10 million in private funds has been committed to research and habitat protection for the bird. An equivalent amount of federal funds was allocated to research, monitoring, recovery planning and public education in a partnership initiative announced by Department of Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Department of Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns in a news conference on April 28. A 5000-acre section of the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge was also declared a "managed-access" area.

The survival of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker points to the importance of habitat protection – and in large, adjoining pieces, not just in tiny fragments (as valuable as those lands



can be). The 220, 000 ha "Big Woods" represents the second-largest contiguous area of bottomland forest in the Mississippi River basin. Much of the forest within its borders is either approaching maturity (oldest trees >60 years) or growing rapidly. The Ivory-bill depends on mature bottomland hardwoods for successful foraging and breeding habitat, so conditions have been changing in favor of the bird for years in this region. Unfortunately, that is not the case for many other imperiled plant and animal species around the US. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) itself is being targeted by those who want to weaken its provisions. Whether or not the rediscovery of the Ivory-bill will help us retain a strong ESA remains to be seen.

In South Carolina, as in so many other places, we are fighting a rising tide of sprawl and poorly planned development which is fragmenting and destroying natural habitat. We need to pass legislation that would require local governments to coordinate plans for the construction of publicly funded roads, sewers and schools – thus better ensuring responsible growth in appropriate areas (H.3881, by Representative Ben Hagood, is such a bill). Continued funding of the Conservation Land Bank, and finding a way to regulate the development of isolated wetlands, are also critical to the future of the environment in our state. We may or may not have Ivory-bills left in SC, but we can honor the rediscovery of the "Lord God Bird" by doing as much as possible to protect large areas of significant habitat and the wealth of species that they harbor.

Volunteer to Sweep SC Waters

Beach Sweep/River Sweep is South Carolina's largest one-day volunteer cleanup event. Saturday, September 17, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., thousands will clear beaches, rivers, lakes, marshes, and swamps of litter. Organized by the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium and S.C. Department of Natural Resources, the Sweep has taken place since 1988. Afterward, The Ocean Conservancy tallies all of the debris data, and this helps organizers learn the sources of litter to stop future pollution before it starts

Aquatic debris is dangerous. Seeing the effects of it first-hand, by participating in the cleanup, can demonstrate that. Litter is a danger to our wildlife, our safety, and our economy. If we don't care for our natural resources, they simply won't be there.

To volunteer, contact: Susan Ferris, coastal coordinator, (843) 727-2078, or Alison Krep, inland coordinator, (843) 953-9553
More info. (including area captains) online:

» http://www.scseagrant.org/education/education_bsrs.htm



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Upcoming Programs, Outings & Lowcountry Events

October Lecture: Thursday, Oct. 13, 7 p.m.

» Deron Lovaas

» Vehicles Campaign Director

» Natural Resources Defense Council

(Please note that in beginning in October our lectures move to Thursdays – still at the library auditorium. Normally we meet for a reception at 6:30 p.m. – due to a scheduling conflict we'll start at 7 p.m. in October.)

Deron Lovaas is vehicles campaign director and deputy director of the smart growth and transportation program. He currently directs NRDC's oil security issue campaign and serves as a lobbyist on transportation issues. Deron coordinated Sierra Club's Challenge to Sprawl campaign and managed Zero Population Growth's sprawl educational program.

America's cars, trucks and buses account for 20 percent of U.S. global warming pollution, as well as soot and smog. And today's inefficient vehicles leave the United States, a nation with just 3 percent of the world's known oil reserves, dangerously dependent on imported oil. NRDC is pushing government and industry to build better cars—cars that burn less gas, cost less to operate and drastically cut down on pollution. NRDC also promotes public transportation and the growth of neighborhoods where people can walk and bike to work.

November Lecture: Thursday, Nov. 10, 6:30 p.m.

» Simon Thompson

» Travel Birding Worldwide

Simon has his own company out of Asheville, NC called Ventures Bird Watching and has led birdwatching trips all over the world. He will give a program on travel and birding with lots of beautiful slides of birds.

Originally from Suffolk, England, Simon has lived in North Carolina for over 10 years. He has lived in Lebanon, Kenya, Yemen, and Ghana, where his interest in birds and natural history began. In addition to traveling extensively in the United States, Simon spent six months in China studying cranes and bird of prey migra-

tion as a member of the British "China CraneWatch" expedition.

Outings:

» Birding at Patriot's Point

» Saturday, September 17, 7:30 a.m.

Join Andy Harrison for a morning birding trip to Patriot's Point in Mt Pleasant. The remnants of hackberry forest near the driving range, as well as other nearby fields and wooded areas, are an excellent spot to observe feeding and resting migrant (and resident) warblers, sparrows and other species.

Meet Andy at 7:30 a.m. at the Omar Shrine Building (near the entrance to Patriot's Point). Bring binoculars, 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, September 16.

» Ft. Johnson Butterfly Walk

» Sunday, October 2, 1:45 p.m.

Join SC DNR biologist Billy McCord and Andy Harrison for an afternoon butterfly and birding trip to the grounds of the Marine Resources Division (and the C of C Grice Marine Lab) at Fort Johnson on James Island. A butterfly expert, Billy has conducted research involving tagging Monarch butterflies (long distance migrants, like many birds) in the Charleston area and has led butterfly counts here in past years. Species that we are likely to see include Monarchs, various Swallowtails, Gulf Fritillaries, Long Tailed Skippers, Cloudless Sulphurs, and others. We also have a good chance of viewing some migrant bird species that are passing through at this time of year.

Meet Andy at 1:45 p.m. Sunday, October 2 at the Publix shopping center (at the end nearest the old Locklear's restaurant) at the corner of Folly Road and Harbor View Road on James Island – we will carpool from there and join Billy at the gate to the Fort Johnson complex. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, food/snacks, sunscreen/insect repellent,

and weather-appropriate clothing.

Register with Andy at 795-6934 (or by e-mail at parula23@aol.com) by Friday, September 30.

» McAlhany Preserve Walkabout

» Sunday, October 9

Our September speaker, Dr. Richard Porcher has agreed to lead a fall wildflower field trip to McAlhany N.P.

Meet Richard and Julian R. Harrison in the Barnes & Noble West Ashley Parking lot down below the Burger King Restaurant at 8:00 a.m. We'll then carpool to the Preserve. This lot is in the NW corner of the intersection of Hwy 61 and Sam Rittenberg Blvd. *(Please note: we'll NOT be meeting in the Burger King parking lot itself.)*

As we'll observe birds and other critters as well, bring binoculars, field guides, and insect repellent. You may also wish to bring a beverage and a lunch. We'll break up about mid-afternoon, but those who wish to leave early may do so.

Other Local Happenings:

» Carolina Bird Club Mtg. in Charleston

The fall meeting of the CBC will be held in Charleston September 30 thru October 2 with a full weekend of field trips for CBC members including Bull Island, Bear Island and Donnelly WMA, Magnolia Gardens, Folly Beach, Dill Plantation, I'On Swamp, East Cooper, and a special trip to Kiawah Island.

More details about the CBC online: <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org>

SEWEE Center Events

Hwy. 17, Awendaw More info. online: <http://www.fws.gov/seweecenter/>

» Live Center for Birds of Prey Program

» Sunday, September 25, 2 p.m.

Learn amazing facts about these beautiful creatures, and the International Center for Birds of Prey that will be open to the public, scheduled for Fall, 2005. Birds are occasionally flown during the program at Sewee.

– continued, SEWEE EVENTS, pg 4.

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.

Birds of North America Online

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, together with the American Ornithologists' Union, has recently released all 18 volumes of the Birds of North America (BNA) online. Following in the footsteps of Wilson, Audubon, and Bent, BNA makes a quantum leap in information beyond what these historic figures were able to provide. This series provides detailed scientific information (18 print volumes; 18,000 pages in total) for each of the 716 species of birds nesting in the USA and Canada.

It's \$40/year for unlimited access to individuals. And that's a great deal! Learn more online at <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu>

SEWEE EVENTS *continued from pg. 3*

» Charleywood Plantation – The Past Revisited
» Sunday, September 18, 2:00 p.m.

Meet our September speaker, Dr. Richard Porcher at Sewee Center for an overview of the progression from abandoned rice fields of the 1800s to the forested lands of today. Then join Dr. Porcher for an interpretative walk to a rice plantation site on the Francis Marion Forest. Pre-registration required, call: 928-3368.

» Mysterious Carolina Bays
» Thursday, September 29, 7:00 p.m.

Want to know more about Carolina Bays? Local authority Morgan McClure, will present a program on these unique habitats that remain a source of fascination. However these Bays were formed, their geological origins remain a mystery. Come at 6:30 for refreshments. Registration suggested: 928-3368

» Guided Walk, Carolina Bays
» Saturday, October 1, 10 a.m.

Meet Morgan McClure at Sewee Center and then on to the Francis Marion National Forest to explore a Carolina Bay. Mr. McClure will point out plants, wildflowers. Free but registration required. Call Sewee Center at 928-3368.



New Members, Renewals, Gift Memberships

For only \$20* you get one-year subscriptions to *Audubon* magazine and *The Lesser Squawk*, and all the benefits of local and National Audubon Society membership. Renew for just \$35/year. *\$15 for Sr. Citizens and Students

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