



The Lesser Squawk

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon &
Natural History Society



WWW.CHARLESTONAUDUBON.ORG

January – February, 2009

In Memoriam

ROBERT WAYNE CHINN 1943-2008

It is with deep sadness we note that Mr. Robert Wayne Chinn, an active chapter member and former President of CNHS, passed away on December 9, 2008.

Bob, as he was known to his many friends and family, loved birding and the outdoors. In addition to his service as CNHS President, Bob was also a frequent field trip leader (and served for a time as Outings Committee chair). In this role he introduced the chapter to novel birding places such as the powerline cut near his home in North Charleston and the West Ashley Greenway and tidal flats. A former Master Chief in the U.S. Navy, Bob was able to secure access for CNHS trips to Parris Island on more than one occasion. He was a regular on several area Christmas Bird Counts, including the Charleston CBC (usually birding the area of Laurel Hill Plantation), and he also served as compiler of the Charleston Spring Bird Count.

Last but not least, Bob was always willing to pitch-in whenever, wherever help was needed – and this included providing his famous chili for holiday parties at the McAlhany Nature Preserve and at our first annual Oyster Roast at Bowen's Island. A truly unique individual, Bob will be dearly missed.

SC Conservation Voters Coordinate Statewide Action

January 14 Lecture Addresses SC Conservation Priorities

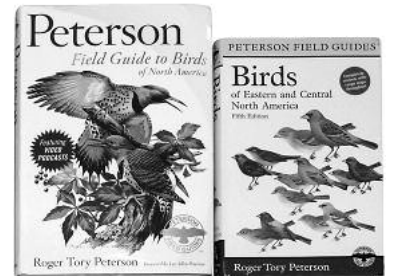
Debbie Parker, Program Director of SC Conservation Voters, headquartered in Columbia, will speak to us in January. She will talk about strategies to advance the conservation community's Conservation Common Agenda in the 2009 legislative session: promoting water conservation, adopting surface water permitting, protecting land through the Conservation Bank, improving air quality (especially around our ports), establishing renewable energy goals and reducing the energy use. Conservation Voters of South Carolina's mission is to make conservation and environmental issues a top priority among elected leaders, candidates, and voters.

» Learn more from their website: CONSERVATIONVOTERSOFSC.ORG

Audubon Update at February Lecture

Audubon SC's Important Bird Areas Coordinator, Ann Shahid speaks to us on February 11th. Ann also serves as the state Audubon's Energy Outreach Coordinator. She will update us on the state of the SC Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program and address Audubon's responses to global warming issues. (More about SC IBAs on page 2.)

Additionally, Ann will show a video, "A Boy, A Book, A Legacy," commemorating Roger Tory Peterson's centennial. Born in 1908, Peterson was an American naturalist, ornithologist, artist, and educator, and held to be one of the founding inspirations for the 20th century environmental movement. Known by millions for developing the template for the modern birder's field guide, his environmental legacy, though less known, is felt equally by all those who actively pursue conservation goals.



A film at our February lecture commemorates field guide pioneer, Roger Tory Peterson.

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2009 Great Backyard Bird Countpage 3
Fun at Home Helps Scientists
Collect Important Bird Data

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Income Tax Forms Give Each of Us
Opportunity to Direct State Funds

» **OUR PUBLIC LECTURES:** We meet in the 2nd floor auditorium of the main branch of the Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun St. in Charleston. Lectures are free, and open to Audubon members and the general public. We gather at 6:30 p.m. for a reception. Programs begin at 7:00 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Details in this issue

Jan. 14 – Lecture: SC Conservation
Jan. 24 – Field Trip: Santee NWR
Feb. 11 – Lecture: Ann Shahid

Feb. 13-16 - Backyard Bird Count
Feb. 14 – Field Trip: ACE Basin
Feb. 28 – Field Trip: South Tibwin

President's Notes: Wrapping-up, Looking Forward

Holiday Oyster Roast Success

Our second annual Holiday Oyster Roast and fundraiser at Bowen's Island Restaurant on December 7 was another great success. The sun was bright, the tunes lively and there were plenty of oysters, beer, and chili! I'd like to thank everyone who participated in organizing the event, including: Cornelia Carrier, Steve Bleezarde, Tom Snowden, Paul Nolan, Don and Lois Jones, Kathy and Mike Hutchinson, Joe Cockrell, Cathy and Carl Miller, and many more.

We enjoyed the music of Charlie McCormick and his bluegrass band, and once again area businesses, organizations and individuals contributed some fine raffle prizes. Thanks also to the Historic Charleston Foundation, Charleston Cooks!, the Terrace Theatre, Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, and Don Jones and Burnie Lundquist (Don supplied the bluebird house and Burnie painted it) for their donations. The Bowen's Island Restaurant is an ideal location for a Low-country oyster roast, and we are very grateful to Robert Barber for hosting our event. We have already begun planning for next year!

Holiday Outreach

I'd also like to recognize Paul Nolan for his initiative in organizing the holiday gift-wrapping fundraiser at Barnes and Noble. He and other chapter members spent portions of their mornings and/or afternoons at the West Ashley store on December 6 and 14 wrapping customers' purchases for tips. Paul created an eye-catching, informative display about CNHS that can be used for future events (you may have seen it at the oyster

roast), and in addition to wrapping gifts, volunteers Diane and Marion Valentino prepared volunteer badges that were also used at Bowen's Island!

McAlhany Works

The November 8 Work Day, organized by Joe Cockrell, at the McAlhany Nature Preserve was well-attended and extremely productive. There were about 16 participants, including five helpful cadets from The Citadel who were recruited by Paul Nolan.

Among our accomplishments: the River Trail loop was finally completed (the older portion was cleaned up and a section linking the lake outlet on the Edisto to the cabin was added), and a new trail leading from the banks of the river to the bluff and then back to the entrance road was cut through the woods (all told, about two miles of new trail were established).

Two new Wood Duck boxes were installed in the small wetland adjacent to the longleaf pine/native grass restoration area across Wire Road, and many of the older boxes around the oxbow lake were cleaned.

Thanks to all who pitched in to help – there is much more that remains to be done at McAlhany, but hopefully the enthusiasm and effort that were present this day can be generated on a more regular basis. This winter, for example, we will be performing another prescribed burn to reduce competitive growth among the young longleaf pines and wiregrass. This is an activity that is essential to the ultimate success of the project, and we need to develop a dedicated crew with burning experience.

Bird Counts Are Good Science

I trust that some of you were able to participate in one or more of the area Christmas Bird Counts over the holiday season. Many thanks to Jeff Mollenhauer and first-timer Paul Nolan for co-compiling the Charleston CBC this year. As I write this, the count date is still several weeks away, but it looks like Jeff and Paul have things well in hand and nearly all of the areas in the count circle will be covered. If you missed out, there are still many opportunities for you to enjoy some winter birding (note our upcoming field trips). Also, don't forget that the Great Backyard Bird Count, sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society (more information on page 3), is scheduled for February 13-16, 2009. With the GBBC you can participate in Citizen Science without leaving your home!

Best to Us All in 2009

For our chapter, as for our nation and state, the New Year brings with it hope but also all the challenges of the old. We depend on contributions of time and money from our membership to keep CNHS going. Funding is critical, but even more important is the time and effort that our small core group of volunteers provide – such as bringing food to a membership meeting, clearing a trail at McAlhany or serving on our Board.

Consider volunteering with us this year, if you can – we need you! As always, feel free to contact me with suggestions or comments. Thanks and a Happy New Year to all!

— Andy Harrison parula23@aol.com
795.6934

South Carolina's Important Bird Areas Program

The Important Bird Areas Program in South Carolina, currently includes 39 recognized and 2 identified IBAs, with sites encompassing a total of 1,156,900 acres. These sites span all of the major habitat types – from the mountains and piedmont to the coastal plain and barrier islands.

Three more areas are in the nomination process, with five sites undergoing data collection so that they can be nominated. One of our first IBAs, Congaree Swamp National Monument, has been named the first National Park in South Carolina and is now

named Congaree National Park.

Audubon South Carolina is utilizing IBA data to drive conservation efforts for the state, with birds of concern and threatened habitat types being the foci. Plans are underway to make IBA information available through digital and printed versions of an IBA booklet, so that information can be accessible to those interested, including scientists, birdwatchers, donors and landowners.

Learn more from SC IBA Coordinator Ann Shahid at our Feb. 11 lecture (details page 1).



Mark Your Calendars

FIELD TRIPS, LECTURES & LOWCOUNTRY EVENTS

LECTURE — SC Conservation Issues

» Wednesday, Jan. 14, 6:30 p.m.

Debbie Parker, Program Director for the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, will discuss strategies to advance voters' conservation concerns.

Details page 1.

FIELD TRIP — Santee Nat'l Wildlife Refuge

» Saturday, Jan. 24, 7 a.m.

Santee National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1941 to alleviate the loss of habitat caused by the construction of hydro-electric projects on the Santee and Cooper Rivers. Stretching for eighteen miles along the northern shore of Lake Marion, the refuge protects 15,095 acres

On Saturday January 24th our group will make its annual pilgrimage to the Bluff and Cuddo units of The Santee National Refuge. We usually see between 50 and 60 species on this outing; including ducks and geese, raptors, woodpeckers and a verity of woodland species. We usually bird until mid afternoon so bring a lunch and water. Bring a scope if you have one and be prepared for the weather.

Our meeting place will be in front of the Wal-Mart in Summerville, next to the First Citizens Bank just off of 17-A. at 7 a.m.. We will car pool from there.

If you plan to attend please register with Don Jones 843-572-8232 or Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com before January 24.

LECTURE — SC Audubon's Ann Shahid

» Wednesday, Feb. 11, 6:30 p.m.

Commemorative Roger Tory Peterson video and a discussion of Important Bird Areas and global warming issues in South Carolina.

Details page 1.

GBBC — Great Backyard Bird Count

» February 13-16

Join birders throughout North America in the 12th Annual GBBC – collect important bird census data in your own backyard! Go to WWW.BIRDCOUNT.ORG

More details below.

FIELD TRIP — Bear Island/Donnelley

» Saturday, Feb. 14, 7 a.m.

On February 14th we'll head down 17 south for one of our traditional winter outings. We usually see around 70 species on this trip including; Tundra Swans, other waterfowl, wading birds, gulls and terns, raptors, winter warblers, pipits, nuthatches and woodpeckers. And of course we'll keep our eyes open for the elusive Whooping Crane.

The two W.M.A. together contain over 20,000 acres of diverse habitat; including pine and hardwood forest, fresh water impoundments, salt marsh and agricultural land. This diversity accounts for the large number of bird and other wildlife

species that may be seen.

Our meeting place will be the Food Lion parking lot at the intersection of Hwy. 17 and 165 at 7 a.m.; and we'll car pool from there. This will be an all day trip so bring food and water in addition to your birding gear; and a scope if you have one. If you plan to go, please register with Don Jones. 843-572-8232 or Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com before the 14th.

FIELD TRIP — South Tibwin Plantation

» Saturday, Feb. 28, 7 a.m.

South Tibwin Plantation, a coastal unit of the Francis Marion National Forest, deserves more attention than it gets from area birders. There are more than 5 miles of hiking trails (don't worry, we won't walk them all!) through upland pine and mixed oak/pine forests to brackish and freshwater impoundments and a vast expanse of salt marsh bordering the Intracoastal Waterway. The impoundments may yield some late winter waterfowl, while in the woods we may see species such as Blue-headed Vireo, Black and White Warbler, Fox Sparrow or Brown Creeper.

Join our group for a half day of birding at South Tibwin, followed by lunch at the Seewee Restaurant in Awendaw! Meet at 7 a.m. in the Lowes parking lot in Mt Pleasant. We'll carpool from there to the site. Bring binoculars/scopes, field guides, water, snacks, sunscreen/insect repellent and weather-appropriate clothing. Note that South Tibwin does NOT have restroom facilities, and there will be a fair amount of walking involved.

Register with Andy at 795-6934 or at parula23@aol.com by Friday, Feb. 27.

Citizen Scientists Prepare for 12th Annual Great backyard Bird Count

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and

at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at WWW.BIRDCOUNT.ORG.

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online.

The data these "citizen scientists" collect helps researchers understand bird popula-

tion trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: A comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

Learn more and sign-up today:

[HTTP://WWW.BIRDCOUNT.ORG](http://WWW.BIRDCOUNT.ORG)

Supporting SC DNR and State Parks

State agencies in SC recently learned that they must cut another 7% percent from their budgets. Our state government is in the midst of a severe budget crisis, and for better or worse Governor Mark Sanford (unlike many other governors) is unwilling to join the growing line of those seeking “bailouts” from the Federal Government. The across-the-board cuts mean that all agencies will be faced with difficult choices about funding programs and filling vacant positions. This will directly affect the ability of SC DNR to protect our natural resources and that of our State Parks to provide visitor services such as education programs.

Birders (and wildlife enthusiasts in general) in SC are fortunate to have many fine public lands to visit, including places such as the Bear Island and Donnelley Wildlife Management Areas and Santee Coastal Reserve. Despite an already limited budget and depleted staff (there are 40 fewer SC DNR employees now than at this time four years ago), the SC Department of Natural Resources does an excellent job of managing these lands and monitoring wildlife populations, such as nesting and migratory seabirds and shorebirds along our coast. These activities are essential but expensive, and if retired employees are not replaced then the ability of remaining staff to complete the work is compromised.

Meanwhile, we also have many great State Parks (within the SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism) in our state, including Huntington Beach State Park – which is justifiably regarded as one of the best birding spots in SC. State Parks provide many services to their visitors, including viewing platforms for wildlife, interpretive trails, guided walks and other educational programs. These services are likely to suffer as a result of the recent sharp budget cuts.

In a recent letter to the editor in *The Post and Courier* (December 12, 2008), SC DNR Board Chairman Michael G. McShane sug-

gested a simple way those of us who are concerned about the cuts and their potential impact can help: Buy fishing or hunting licenses – even if you don’t hunt or fish. Revenues from hunters and fisherman have histori-

cally played a major role in wildlife conservation in SC and across the United States. You can purchase a license online at www.dnr.sc.gov, by calling 866-714-3611 or at many local sporting shops. Mr. McShane also advised calling state legislators and letting them know the value we place on our natural resources and the programs and staff of the SC DNR. Contact information for your state legislators is available at:

[HTTP://WWW.SCSTATEHOUSE.GOV.](http://www.scstatehouse.gov)

There is also an easy way to support our State Parks. On your SC Income Tax form there is a check-off box where you can make a donation to the SC State Park system. Compared to other states with a similar check-off system, SC residents contribute only about 5-10% as much for their State Parks. Therefore the Parks are launching a state-wide campaign called “Check-off for State Parks” to boost participation. One of intended uses of revenues generated from the campaign is to rebuild the viewing platforms at Huntington Beach State Park. If you have been to HBSP recently, then you know that the platforms at the Mullet Pond are definitely in need of replacement! Of course, while speaking to your legislators about SC DNR you should also mention the importance of our State Parks and the services they provide.

These are tough economic times, and future cuts in state and federal budgets appear inevitable. However, actions by individual citizens can make a difference – and must do so, if we value safeguarding our state’s natural resources and providing environmental education in our parks.



*...there are 40 fewer
SC DNR employees
now than at this time
four years ago...*

Don't Forget to Come Out and Play in Our State Parks

South Carolina State Parks is having its 75th birthday party and you're invited to 'Come Out and Play!' With more than 80,000 acres of protected lands from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the sand dunes of the Atlantic, South Carolina State Parks protect some of the most inviting natural, cultural and recreational destinations in the U.S. – including some of the best birding anywhere!

The 75th anniversary activities include organized programs all around the state: a new Jr. Ranger Program to “educate, entertain, and inspire” kids; a Photography

Contest open to anyone who takes a photograph within the State Parks system and chooses to submit it; a Winter Bald Eagle Survey at Devils Fork State Park; What's On The Menu? (feeding aquarium animals, NOT eating them!) at Edisto Beach State Park; Meet at the Hunting Island lighthouse for a fascinating look at South Carolina's only publicly accessible historic lighthouse; Musket and Cannon Demonstrations detailing the threats to early English settlers at Charles Towne Landing; Birding walks or Coastal Kayaking at Huntington Beach State Park with

2-hour guided tours; Or go Camping in South Carolina state parks for an affordable family vacation, offering incredible opportunities for seeing South Carolina wildlife in its natural habitat!

For more information about these and more anniversary events and ongoing parks programs, visit online:

[HTTP://WWW.COMEOUTANDPLAY.NET](http://www.comeoutandplay.net)

Don't overlook the opportunities in 2009. And whatever you choose, we're very lucky to have the SC parks we do, right here, in our own backyards.

Our Own Francis Beidler Forest Recognized by State, World

In honor of the National Audubon Society's Francis Beidler Forest and the significant private land conservation and education programs being achieved there, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford proclaimed "Beidler Forest Week" for the week of Nov. 30 to Dec. 6, 2008.

On December 4th there was a celebration of Beidler Forest's designation as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. The Governor attended and unveiled a new plaque commemorating the honor. Norman Brunswig, Executive Director of Audubon SC said, "The Ramsar designation is the 'Oscars' of wetland conservation and validation of more than 35 years of work on wetlands essential to the people of South Carolina. We are grateful to have the Governor's support and encourage all of you to come see us and help support this rare ecosystem."

Purchased by the Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy in 1969, Francis Beidler Forest originally comprised just over 3,400 acres of Four Holes Swamp. Within that stand were the 1,783 acres of old-growth forest, one of the largest forests of its kind on Earth.

Brunswig believes "Audubon and its conservation partners can grow the sanctuary to 25,000 acres or more as we add wider upland buffers, more habitats and make connections to other protected areas in Four Holes Swamp and the Edisto River." Beidler's current 430,000-acre watershed represents one third of the total watershed of the longest, free-flowing black water river in the US, the Edisto. The need to protect this vital resource from a host of threats, including sprawl, poorly controlled mining and timber operations, and industrial agriculture, continues.

Home to 1,000-year old trees and abundant native wildlife, the Sanctuary has welcomed several hundred thousand visitors and school children from all over the state, the country and the world. Since 1977, the Sanctuary has grown to nearly 16,000 acres of land owned and managed by Audubon, with several thousand additional acres protected by private conservation easements in and around the swamp.

Favored by hundreds of thousands of

birds that migrate to South Carolina after wintering in South America, the region was recognized as an Important Bird Area in 2001.

"Beidler Forest is one of only a few sites in the U.S. recognized as both an Important Bird Area and a Ramsar site," said John Cecil, Director of the Important Bird Areas Program for Audubon and the Society's Representative on the U.S. Ramsar Committee. "This dual acknowledgment celebrates not only the beauty and rich biodiversity found at Beidler, but the collaboration of Audubon, its partners, and the communities in and around Beidler. Each has played an essential role in conserving this jewel."

Some of the 140 bird species that nest or make migratory stops in Beidler are on Audubon's list of Common Birds in Decline, including Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Meadowlark, Loggerhead Shrike, Field

Sparrow, Common Grackle, Whip-poor-will, and Little Blue Heron. The forest's Red-headed Woodpecker, Swallow-tailed Kite, Wood Thrush, Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Painted Bunting, Rusty Blackbird, and Swainson's Warbler are on the Audubon WatchList. These wetlands are also home to rare plants, including Dwarf Trillium (*Trillium pusillum*) a rare flower found only in South Carolina at Four Holes Swamp at Beidler Forest.

Here in the Lowcountry, we lucky to have Beidler and all that it represents so close at hand: The Audubon Center at Beidler Forest offers a full range of environmental educational opportunities. In 2007 over 12,000 people visited the Audubon Center at Beidler Forest, contributing to the National Audubon Society's nationwide effort to connect people with nature.

The Ramsar Convention:

The Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention's mission statement commits the State Parties to the Convention to "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world." Learn more at WWW.RAMSAR.ORG

What Makes Beidler Important?

The Francis Beidler Forest has been an Important Bird Area since 2001, highlighting the need to protect this vital resource from threats including sprawl. The site boasts over 15,000 acres and is a popular resting stop for many thousands of birds that migrate to South Carolina after wintering in South America. A number of these species are on Audubon's WatchList and Common Birds in Decline, including the strikingly-colored Prothonotary Warbler, prolific in this particular area.

One of Beidler Forest's most unique features is the largest remaining virgin forest of bald cypress and tupelo gum trees in the world, including 1,500 year-old trees long vanished from the rest of North America. It is able to support a unique number of species, including large num-

bers of colonial waterbirds, such as the Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Little Blue Heron, Great Egret, Anhinga and White Ibis. Over 25 years of spring breeding bird survey data reveal this site also hosts some of the most dense nesting populations of song birds in the Eastern US, with nesting Hooded Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo, to name a few.

The center has been key in Audubon's mission to connect people with nature, with an educational visitor center, 1.75-mile boardwalk trail (both are wheelchair accessible), several hiking miles of old logging roads and a canoe trail on which guided trips are led, providing visitors the chance to explore deep into the swamp's interior.

The Charleston Audubon & Natural History Society

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Charleston Audubon – serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties, founded as the Charleston Natural History Society in 1905, and a chapter of the National Audubon Society since 1970 – 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 at www.CharlestonAudubon.org.

Book Examines Beauty & Physics of Flight

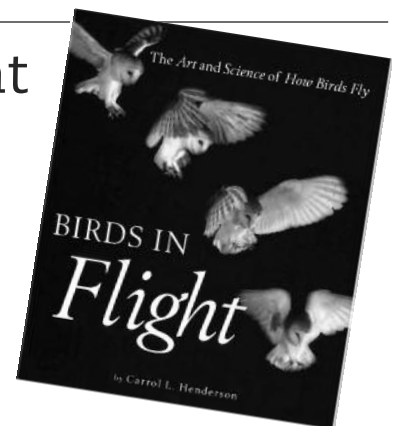
Birds in Flight: The Art and Science of How Birds Fly (Voyager Press, 2008) is a beautiful book of avian photography. It is also a good primer on the principles of flight, and clearly a work of passion by an author who both enjoys watching birds in flight, and teaching others about them.

While there are many outstanding photographs in this book, not all were chosen solely for beauty – throughout the text photos illuminate concepts important to the physics and ornithology under discussion. The author has divided the book into three parts; examining the wonder (and art) of birds in flight; providing a primer on avian aerodynamics; and looking at the ways different species accommodate their different flight needs (raptors vs waterfowl, for example).

There may be more beautiful books of avian photographs (though, not many), and more complete ornithological texts available, but by putting these photographs to work, and sharing a lifetime of birding experience the author has created very accessible and enjoyable book which will also greatly inform most readers..

While a little more attention could be given to bird conservation, this book should be of interest to anyone attracted to learning more about our avian neighbors.

Birds In Flight: The Art and Science of How Birds Fly is written by wildlife biologist and naturalist Carrol Henderson. Mr. Henderson has led birding trips, and pursued his own photography across the globe. Much of his work is showcased in this book, alongside diagrams, illustrations and some work by other photographers.



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