



The LESSER SQUAWK

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon Society

www.CharlestonAudubon.org

January – February 2007

President's Notes:

As I write this, we are well into the tumult of the Holiday season. Despite the commotion, I always look forward to this time of year because I have the opportunity to participate in one or more of the many Christmas Bird Counts conducted in coastal SC. Winter birding here is sometimes challenging (freezing winds and numbed fingers and toes come to mind) but often rewarding. The CBC season ends January 5, but you can still make a contribution to "Citizen Science" by taking part in the 10th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count held February 16-19, 2007. For this count you can stay indoors, too! More information about the event is available online (also see pg. 4):

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

Our 4th Annual Picnic at the McAlhany Nature Preserve on December 2 was a resounding success. About 30 participants enjoyed hotdogs, hamburgers and a variety of other dishes, including two kinds of chili, falafel, salads, fresh fruit and some delicious desserts. We were able to admire the new metal roofing on the cabin, picnic shelter and shed that Ed Valopi and his assistants recently completed. The exterior of the shed looks great now, too, after the thorough cleaning and staining that Joe Cockrell gave it in November. Thanks to Joe and his decorative silhouettes, the shelter and shed are now officially the "Green Heron" and "Kingfisher" buildings! Joe, Tom Snowden and I have also assembled 20+ tree identification signposts for the new nature trail, and by the time of the picnic we had installed eight of these. Next on the agenda is to apply some fresh paint to the exterior and interior of the

continues – SEE President, pg. 2

Quick Calendar – CNHS Events:

- 1/11 Film: Watching Sparrows pg. 1
- 1/13 Fieldtrip: Pitt St./Ft. Moultrie pg. 3
- 1/27 Fieldtrip: Santee N.W.R. pg. 3
- 2/8 Talk: Ivory-Billed Woodpeckers pg. 1
- 2/10 Fieldtrip: A.C.E. Basin pg. 3
- 2/24 Fieldtrip: Santee Coastal Reserve pg. 3

Sparrow Watching Moves Indoors For Our January Program Meeting!

At our Thursday, January 11, 2007 program we'll enjoy "Watching Sparrows," an extraordinary film over three years in the making. Watching Sparrows "is awesome. It is just like watching sparrows in the field, only the views are better, the sound is cleaner, and there's someone helpfully explaining what you are watching," says Chris Elphick, editor of *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*. Close-up filming and state of the art sound recordings capture the sparrows which are frequently the songbirds of North America's most dramatic landscapes. This guide spans the United States and Canada to explore the lives and breeding habitats of 46 species of sparrows, towhees, juncos and longspurs. This film is by award-winning filmmakers Michael Male and Judy Fieth.

NOTE: We'll have two copies available as door prizes!

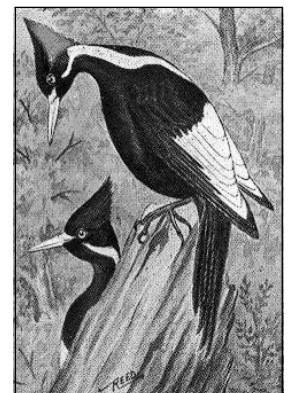
Visit www.birdfilms.com to learn more.

Lectures are held in the 2nd floor auditorium of the Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun Street, downtown Charleston. We meet for a reception at 6:30 p.m. – and our meetings – which are free and open to the public – start at 7 p.m. Drinks, plates and napkins provided – please consider bringing a snack to share!

Ivory-Bill Researcher Scott Simon Comes to Charleston for February Lecture

Mark your calendars for Thursday, February 8th for this joint meeting with the Nature Conservancy with guest speaker Scott Simon, director of the Nature Conservancy in Arkansas and co-leader of the search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Hear first-hand about the incredible hope and effort that he and others have poured into the Big Woods. Mr. Simon calls the ivory-bill's rediscovery a "call to action." Come hear his story and learn about the ongoing effort to locate ivory-bills and preserve the Big Woods.

The ivory-billed woodpecker once ranged through swampy forests in the southeastern and lower Mississippi valley states: from North Carolina to Florida and west to eastern Texas and Arkansas, with some 1800s reports in Kentucky, Missouri and Oklahoma. John James Audubon reported ivory-bills as far north as the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers around 1825. The species' story keeps growing and gathering public interest: In Arkansas, last June, a \$10,000 reward was announced for anyone who leading researchers to a confirmed sighting at a nest, feeding or roosting site. And the evidence from Arkansas has spurred efforts elsewhere: In September researchers released evidence of active nesting they gathered in Florida's Panhandle. Join us as Mr. Simon relates his story from the front lines.



11/06 Fieldtrip Reports: Join Us in 2007!

HUNTINGTON BEACH REPORT *from Andy Harrison*

Braving early morning chill, the CNHS outing led by Don Jones and myself to Huntington Beach State Park on November 18th was favored with pleasant weather and good birding (80 species observed). Nine people made the trip, and our first stop at Mullet Pond was a good omen of things to come. Right next to the observation platform we got a nice look at a Long-billed Dowitcher feeding with three Short-billed Dowitchers. These species are difficult to distinguish most of the time (bill length is not a reliable character), but the barring pattern on the flanks of the Long-billed bird – vs. spotting in the Short-billed – was readily apparent. There were various ducks in the pond, including Hooded Mergansers, Bufflehead, Blue-winged Teal, Ruddy Ducks, Northern Shovelers, and Gadwall, and we had good looks at a couple of Osprey in flight and a Bald Eagle in a tall pine across the water.

We had hoped to see Ground Doves at the Visitor Center, but no such luck – the group did observe Eastern Towhees, White-throated Sparrows and Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets near the feeders there, however. Once we got to the beach we were treated to some excellent views of Northern Gannets diving very close to shore. We also saw Red-throated and Common Loons swimming, and there were some large groups of cormorants and scoters flying offshore. At the jetties we saw Purple Sandpipers foraging among the rocks and some very tame Ruddy Turnstones (they must get a few handouts from the fishermen!). Some of the group got to see a mink running along the jetty near the dunes, too. Behind the dunes there were three Piping Plovers feeding at the edge of a small lagoon. One of these birds was banded, and the banding pattern indicated that the bird was one of the Great Lakes population (information provided to Craig Watson by Ms. Olivia LeDee, Minnesota Dept. of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology).

After returning to the parking area, most of our group started heading back to Charleston (it was well past lunch time by then). A few of us ventured over to Atalaya for some afternoon birding, however. We walked down the Carriage Path for a look into Mullet Pond from its south end and were rewarded with sightings of the three "peeps" (Western, Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers). But the best bird of the day – for me, at least – was the Brown Creeper that Craig Watson spotted spiraling up a red cedar tree just as we were heading back to the car. This bird is a rare winter visitor to coastal SC, and I had not seen one in the state since the late 90s. What a great way to end a very enjoyable trip!

Selected Birding Highlights:

Northern Shoveler	White-winged Scoter
Red-throated Loon	Northern Gannet
White Ibis	Osprey
Bald Eagle	Piping Plover
Red Knot	Purple Sandpiper
Long-billed Dowitcher	Great Black-backed Gull
Brown Creeper	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Cedar Waxwing	Chipping Sparrow

DEWEES ISLAND TRIP REPORT *from Don Jones*

Birding by Golf Cart

Nine participants made the ferry ride to Dewees Island on November 4th, a cool bright morning with a moderate North East wind. Upon arriving we were met by Jon Lutz, the resident naturalist who assigned us three golf carts. We loaded our gear and we're off to the first birding spot, which was only minutes away. We were treated to great close up views of Ibis, Wood Storks, Egrets, Yellowlegs and Dowitchers. The birds were as cold as we were so they stayed put, which afforded us time to get some great views with binoculars, scope and cameras.

After a stop at Jon's offices to warm up with a hot beverage, it was back into the golf carts and a run to the front beach where we really got to appreciate the brisk wind. Then several stops to explore the maritime forest habitat and finally a visit to the North end of the island and an expansive salt marsh.

The group counted a total of 45 species. After a quick alfresco lunch we boarded the 12:30 ferry for the twenty minute ride back to Isle of Palms. A good trip (and it did warm up) which we should consider doing again.

Learn more about Dewees Island online:

<http://www.deweesisland.com>

<http://www.deweesislandpoa.org>

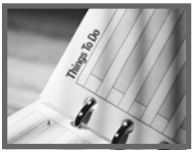
President *continued from pg 1*

cabin and to finish work on the nature trail. We'll need some help from our membership and will probably hold work-days (announced or informal) early in 2007 to accomplish these tasks. Our Longleaf Pine restoration project in the old fields across Wire Road continues to make quiet progress, too. Mid-December a crew hired by Joe planted more than 10,000 seedlings on about 23 acres of cleared ground.

The New Year looks to be another good one for CNHS. At our January program we'll view the beautiful and timely film, "Watching Sparrows," which hopefully will inspire us to get out and work on our identification skills with the often skittish but fascinating members of this group of birds. In February we welcome Scott Simon, director of TNC in Arkansas, who will describe the ongoing search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the Big Woods.

There are a number of great field trips planned for January and February – to some excellent winter birding spots, such as Fort Moultrie/Pitt Street Bridge and the Santee National Wildlife Refuge. Our chapter is also participating in the SC Shorebird Project coordinated by Sid Maddock of NC Audubon, and in December some of us attended a Piping Plover Survey Workshop to learn how to conduct surveys for these and other shorebirds. If you missed the workshop you can still help with the study – contact me at parula23@aol.com or 795-6934 for more information.

Hope you all enjoyed a wonderful holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in 2007!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Upcoming Programs, Outings & Lowcountry Events

(Please note that this is the Jan.-Feb. issue of The Lesser Squawk: the next issue will cover March-April 2007. Please mark upcoming events on your calendar now!

Up-to-date calendar items will also be posted online: www.charlestonaudubon.org)

LECTURES:

Thurs. January 11

- » Reception & Film Program
- » "Watching Sparrows"
- » A Video Fieldguide
- See story, pg. 1

Thurs. February 8

- » Joint Lecture with Nature Conservancy
- » Speaker Scott Simon
- » Director, TNC, Arkansas
- » Rediscovering the Ivory-Billed
- See story, pg. 1

FIELDTRIPS:

Sat. January 13th, 7:00 a.m.

- » Pitt Street Bridge + Ft. Moultrie
- On Saturday, January 13, Don Jones will lead our first 2007 field trip to Fort Moultrie and the Pitt St. Bridge. We'll meet at 7:00 a.m. in the Moultrie Plaza shopping center parking lot on Coleman Blvd. (Wild Birds Unlimited is located there) and car pool to Fort Moultrie.

We should see gulls, terns, loons and ducks in the harbor as well as Killdeers, Horned Larks etc. on the large lawn surrounding the fort. We'll also have access, via a boardwalk and dock, to the sheltered water and salt marsh on the back side of the island. We'll return to Mount Pleasant and spend the rest of the morning at Pitt St. Bridge. The dropping tide should afford us good views of wading birds, Oystercatchers and shore birds; plus there are usually several species of sparrows in the cover close to the foot path. Afterward we'll meet at a Shem Creek restaurant for lunch so bring your binoculars and an appetite. If you plan to attend please notify Don Jones before the 13th 572-8232 or Birdfrogdjjj@aol.com

Sat. January 27th, 7:00 a.m.

» Santee National Wildlife Refuge

On Saturday January 27th we'll visit Santee N.W.R. which is one of our traditional winter field trips. On past visits we have seen Sandhill Cranes, many species of ducks and geese, eagles, other species of raptors, sparrows, vireos and wading birds. Expect to see 45 to 60 different species.

We'll meet in the Wal-Mart parking lot in Summerville, off of 17-A, at 7:00 a.m. and car pool to the refuge. Bring all your birding gear plus a snack and lunch as this will be a full day trip, rapping-up around mid-afternoon.

Please notify Don Jones before the 27th if you plan to attend – 572-8232 or Birdfrogdjjj@aol.com

Sat. February 10th, 7:30 a.m.

» Bear Isl. + Donnelley W.M.A.

Tidal creeks, salt marsh, fresh water impoundments, hardwood and pine forest are some of the habitats that we will see in this section of the A.C.E. Basin.

Join Don and Andy as we look for Tundra Swans, White Pelicans, eagles and many other species of water fowl and raptors. This will be an all day trip so bring food and beverage to hold you until dinner time. We will meet in the parking lot in front of the Food Lion on 17-A, just south of Ravenel at 7:30 a.m.

Please notify Don Jones before the 10th @ 572-8232 or Birdfrogdjjj@aol.com if you plan to attend.

Sat. February 24th, 7:00 a.m.

» Santee Coastal Reserve

Late winter or early Spring – whatever you call this time of year – it's a great time to go birding in the Lowcountry. We'll visit some diverse habitats where we may see some early spring migrants such as Purple Martins, or Parula Warblers as well as our winter residents that are getting ready to move north. We'll meet at our usual spot in the Lows parking lot off 17 in Mount Pleasant at 7:00 a.m. After a half day birding at the reserve which is a few miles north of McClellanville we'll

stop for lunch at the See Wee restaurant. If time permits we may also take a short drive to Hampton Plantation for an hour or so. Please contact Don Jones before 2/24 if you plan to attend... 572-8232 or Birdfrogdjjj@aol.com

OTHER GROUPS

Georgia Ornithological Society

- » Winter Meeting, Tybee Island, GA
- » January 12–15, 2007

Our neighbors to the south, the G.O.S. will be holding their Winter Meeting on nearby Tybee Island. Headquarters for the event will be the Ocean Plaza Beach Resort with registration beginning at 3 p.m. on January 12. Non-members can register for the conference meeting: Complete details are available at the G.O.S. website:

<http://www.gos.org>

CNHS members might be interested in the program and some of the fieldtrips, including outings to the Glennville Water Treatment Facility, Little Tybee Island, Bear Island, Harris Neck NWR and more, including Savannah are Hot Spots.

- » Spring Meeting, Jekyll Island, GA
- » April 20–22, 2007

The G.O.S. Spring meeting is being planned for April. Stay tuned, and visit their website, for details.

SC Native Plant Society

- » A.C.E. Basin History
- » January 16, 6:30 p.m.

Phil Mailer, Manager of Coastal Resources at SC DNR will speak about the ACE, it's history and challenges for the future. SCNPS monthly meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Meet at 6:30 in 101 Duckett Hall, Biology Auditorium on the Citadel campus.

And be sure to take a look into the Society's fieldtrips – information online at:

<http://www.scnps.org>



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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.

Fieldguides Available for Enthusiastic New Birders

Whether you are a brand new birder, or a long-time watcher who's getting more serious... the Charleston Audubon Society would like to help. We've purchased a collection of used field-guides that we're now going to make available to any member who feels they'd like to use one to improve their birding abilities.



Experienced birders may like to argue about which fieldguide is best, but for anyone just starting out, having ANY guide is a great help and a great place to start.

To receive one of our guides (our supply is limited!) please talk to Steve or Cornelia at one of our lecture meetings at the library, or send email: steve@charlestonaudubon.org.



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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10th Annual Backyard Bird Count

Count for the Birds in America's Great Backyard: February 16-19, 2007

- No Fee or registration required
- All ages and skill levels welcome
- Track results in real time online
- Count in your backyard, balcony, schoolyard, park, wildlife refuge

Join with thousand of others to find out how many birds are being seen in your area and across the continent this winter. By participating in the you help document where birds are, and track changes, helping scientists paint a picture of the state of birds now and across time.

More information at www.birdsource.org/gbbc