


# The Lesser Squawk

Newsletter of the   
Charleston Audubon &  
Natural History Society

WWW.CHARLESTONAUDUBON.ORG

March-April, 2009

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### Spring Bird Count + Birdathon .....INSERT

Participate May 10th. Help us raise funds –  
Make a donation - Recruit donors!

### March + April Calendar .....page 3

Don't miss a field trip or event because  
of a lost date: Mark your calendars now!

### Spring Events at Beidler Forest .....page 2

Even if you've been a regular visitor,  
staff have made plans for events that  
will let you see Beidler in new ways.

## President's Notes

Although this winter has been a little colder than we've gotten used to in recent years, average winter temperatures have been on the increase. This is reflected by changes in the winter ranges of many bird species, as revealed by analyses of the past 40 years of Christmas Bird Count data by Audubon scientists. See the press release online:

» <http://web1.audubon.org/news/pressRelease.php?id=1320>

### What Matters: These Counts... Count

Some 58% of the 305 species studied in the recent count on the North American Continent showed northward range movement. The average overall movement was 35 miles, but some species – such as Purple Finch, Pine Siskin and Ring-necked Duck – have experienced range shifts of hundreds of miles. I can remember seeing Purple Finches at feeders here during the winter fairly often 30 years ago, but now they are much less frequent visitors to the Charleston area. Only 38% of grassland species moved north, but these birds are constrained by severe habitat loss and have fewer places to which they can move (thus such species face multiple threats from climate change).

Clearly we are witnessing the effects of global warming on our bird populations, and it is imperative that we do what we can to stop the human causes of this phenomenon. You can learn more

— continued, see **President**, page 2

## The SC Shorebird Project – Learning for Conservation

South Carolina has a rich coastal environment and thousands of barrier islands, and yet only five islands in the entire state are supporting seabird nesting, and populations of shorebirds are declining here in South Carolina, and throughout their migratory ranges. Learning more about these bird populations, their movements and habitat needs, is important if conservation efforts are going to be properly applied.

The US Fish and Wildlife Piping Plover Recovery Plan is seen as a blueprint for recovering endangered species; for the plover this means doing research and taking action on both the birds' northern breeding grounds and its wintering territory in the Southeast, including South Carolina. The South Carolina Shorebird Conservation Project is a cooperative effort of US Fish and Wildlife, The National Audubon, SC Audubon, SC DNR and volunteers from our chapter and throughout the community.

### Our March 11 Lecture

On Wednesday, March 11, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Migratory Birds Biologist Melissa Bimbi is our speaker. Melissa was instrumental in getting a significant grant for the multi-year SC Shorebird Project, tracking and identifying shorebirds in our state. Melissa has also played important roles as a volunteer, assisting with Cape Romain Loggerhead Sea Turtle nest protection work and other vital projects.

## Carolina Dogs, a Remarkable Legacy

**Our April 8 Lecture:** Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin retired in 2005 after serving for nearly forty years as a Senior Research Scientist and an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL) at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site near Aiken, SC. For nearly thirty years he has been studying the ecology and behavior of primitive free-ranging dogs found on and around the Savannah River Site and elsewhere in the southeast. His presentation, on **Wednesday, April 8**, will describe Dr. Brisbin's work with these primitive dogs and his establishment of them as a registered breed.

Studies have identified this form of dog whose appearance and behavior are similar to those of the Australian Dingo and suggest that these dogs may

— continued, see **Carolina Dogs**, page 4

» 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, guests and the general public. We gather at 6:30 p.m. for a reception and speakers will begin at 7:00 p.m.

» Refreshments for Reception

Please consider bringing food to our next reception! Bring anything: Cheese and crackers, fruit, chips and dips, nuts, cookies, cakes, whatever. We supply the drinks and ice but depend on our members to provide the spread!

## President's Notes *from page 1*

about steps individual citizens can take at  
» <http://www.audubon.org/globalWarming>

### Spring Count is Coming

If you were not able to participate in one of the Christmas Bird Counts or the Great Backyard Bird Count this past year, another opportunity to contribute to "Citizen Science" is coming up in May. Our Spring Bird Count and Birdathon will be held this year on Sunday, May 10 (see insert for more details). Proceeds from the Birdathon will be used to support ongoing work at our McAlhany Nature Preserve, including expansion of the trail system and the purchase of supplies and equipment necessary for conducting prescribed burns in the area of the longleaf pine/native grass restoration project. You don't have to be an expert birder to participate on the count – in fact, it's a great way to learn birds! Last year we observed a total of 147 species and 10264 individual birds in our 15-mile diameter count circle (same as that used for the Christmas Count), but on a "good day" we could easily approach 170 species.

### Officers for 2009-2010

Election of next year's CNHS officers will be held at our May 13 membership meeting. The following candidates have agreed to run for office: For President, Paul Nolan; for Vice-President, Steve Moore (who recently joined the Board as an at-large member); for Treasurer, Tom Snowden; and for Secretary, Cathy Miller. I'd like to thank each of them for their willingness to serve, and I'm grateful for all the hard work that the current officers and Board members (and other volunteers) do to keep this organization running. Although I will be stepping down as President, I will continue as an at-large member on the Board and expect to remain active with CNHS for the foreseeable future. The time I have spent working and birding with the Society since 2003 has been a very rewarding part of my life.

As always, feel free to contact me with suggestions or comments. If you have the time and interest to volunteer, please do! We need your help – and not just at meetings, fundraisers or bird counts. For example, if you can write an article or contribute photos for *The Lesser Squawk*; or know someone – perhaps yourself – who might be willing to deliver a lecture or educational program for CNHS; or are a lawyer (or know one) whom we could contact for occasional *pro bono* legal advice, let us know. Thanks – I hope to see you at a CNHS event in the near future!

— Andy Harrison

# Charleston Spring Count and Birdathon: May 10th

Get out your binoculars, checklists... and checkbooks! The Charleston Spring Bird Count and Birdathon will be held this year on Sunday, May 10. Our chapter has conducted the Spring Count for many years, and the data we collect is extremely valuable in detecting long-term trends in bird populations. The money we raise during this year's Birdathon will be used to support ongoing work at our McAlhany Nature Preserve and other local chapter activities. For example, at our November 8 MNP work day we laid out more than two miles of new trails, and small footbridges are needed at several points to cross seasonal wet spots. We also need additional equipment (extra drip torches, etc.) to help conduct the prescribed burns required by our long-term longleaf pine/native grass restoration project. Our 15-mile diameter "count circle" (the same area used on the Charleston Christmas Bird Count) is divided into territories, and groups of observers – led by experienced birders – record the numbers of species and individuals they see or hear in their territory over the course of the day. This is birding with a purpose, but it is usually a lot of fun too!

**Sign up for the count:** Birders of all skill levels are welcome to participate on the Spring Count. Becoming involved in a count is a good way to improve your birding abilities! Contact the compiler, Andy Harrison, at 795-6934 or [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com) for more information.

**How to make a pledge:** You can pledge a fixed amount (\$10, \$25 or \$50, for example) or pledge a specific amount per species identified. We generally observe between 150 and 170 species on a typical Spring Count. Don't hesitate to ask friends, relatives and neighbors to support the Birdathon! Use the pledge form included in this newsletter or send your pledge via e-mail to Andy Harrison at [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com) (put Spring Bird Count in the subject line).

Our birding party with the highest species total and the donor making the largest contribution to the Birdathon will receive recognition in *The Lesser Squawk* for their accomplishment. Please be patient when awaiting results – tabulating the data and verifying any unusual sightings after the count day may take a week or more (after all, we want to maintain a high-quality dataset for the long-term record). Whether you join us for the Spring Count or make a donation in support of the Birdathon (or both), you will be taking part in a very worthy cause. Thanks very much!

## Spring Events at Beidler Forest

The staff at Beidler Forest is offering a variety of Saturday morning activities through the spring season that they hope will allow even regular visitors to experience the old-growth, cypress-tupelo swamp in an entirely new way! Reservations are required for all programs. Call 843-462-2150 for information.

» **Swamp Stomps** – Audubon naturalist-guided OFF-boardwalk treks deep into the swamp. See the sanctuary's largest Cypress Tree. Expect to get waist deep in the swamp! Cost \$8/person. No on under 16 please.  
**April 4 and , May 9 at 9:00 a.m.**

— continued, see Beidler, page 4



# Mark Your Calendars

FIELD TRIPS, LECTURES & LOWCOUNTRY EVENTS

## Field Trip — Caw Caw Preserve

» Sunday, March 8, 9 a.m.

Our first trip in March is to one of everyone's favorite local birding spots — The Caw-Caw Preserve. Because of the many different types of habitat within the preserve; including old rice fields, mixed hardwood forest and cypress swamps, we might see ducks, wading birds, warblers, woodpeckers and raptors.

The gate opens at 9:00 a.m. so we'll aim arrive on time so we can get started as soon after 9:00 as possible. There are rest rooms and a picnic shelter available. There is also a \$1.00 charge. The plan is to bird until noon or one o'clock so bring a lunch, along with your birding gear. This is early spring so bring your insect repellent.

Meeting time will be 9:00 a.m. on Sunday in the parking lot at Caw Caw. If you plan to attend please register with Don Jones by March 7th. 572-8232 or [Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com](mailto:Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com)

## SC Shorebird Project Charleston Audubon Lecture

» Wednesday, Mar. 11, 6:30 p.m.  
» USFW Biologist Melissa Bimbi

See story, page 1.

## Field Trip — Poplar Grove

» Saturday, March 21, 7:00 a.m.

Poplar Grove is a 6,000 acre property that straddles the Charleston - Dorchester County line. It contains numerous habitats including pine and mixed hardwood upland forest, cypress swamps, agricultural land and fresh and salt water features. The developed area is rather small and 3,100 acres of the land is under a conservation easement.

We will meet at 7:00a.m. at the sales office which is reached by driving south on 17, past Bees Ferry Rd. After crossing the bridge over Rentowles Creek, make the second right on Davison Rd; there is a sign for Poplar Grove at the intersection. Proceed 1.7 miles on Davison Rd and

watch for the entrance on the right. A brick wall, a white gate and a Poplar Grove sign are very visible. Follow Ten Shillings Rd. for about 1/4 mile to the sales office.

Bring food and water, bug spray, and dress for the weather. We will do mostly road side birding with a minimum amount of walking. There are rest rooms at the sales office.

If you plan to attend, please register with Don Jones 572-8232 or [Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com](mailto:Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com) by March 20th.

To learn more about Poplar Grove  
» [www.poplargrovecharleston.com](http://www.poplargrovecharleston.com)

## Natural History on the Paw — South Carolina Dogs Charleston Audubon Lecture

» Wednesday, April. 8, 6:30 p.m.  
» Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin

See story, page 1.

## Field Trip — Windwood Farm

» Saturday, April 14, 7:00 a.m.

Windwood Farm is a privately run, not-for-profit facility for abused children ages 5 to 15. The Farm is located on a 100-acre parcel of land on the west side of the Wando River. In addition to salt marsh there are several fresh water ponds, including Causey's Pond which is home to Wood Ducks, Anhinga, Moorhens and numerous species of wading birds. There are also stands of pine and hardwoods and several large meadows. Along with the birds on Causey's Pond we might see Killdeers, E. Meadowlarks, Bluebirds and Loggerhead Shrikes.

We'll meet on Saturday morning in the parking lot in front of Lowe's in Mount Pleasant just off of 17 at 7:00a.m. and car pool from there. There will be a moderate amount of walking and you may need to bring insect repellent. Birding should end at noon or 1 o'clock so you might want to bring food and water.

Please register ahead with Don Jones before April 4. 572-8232 or by email: [birdfrogdjlj@aol.com](mailto:birdfrogdjlj@aol.com)

## Wine & Warblers Beidler Forest Event

» Saturday, April 18, 5:30 p.m.

As part of a small group, participants will be lead by expert birders on a leisurely stroll along the 1.75-mile boardwalk trail that leads into the heart of the virgin cypress swamp sanctuary. Along the way, sample wines and tasty snacks while birds are located and identified by the guides. Contrary to popular belief, the number of birds seen, does NOT go up in direct proportion to the amount of wine that is imbibed! Cost \$40/person. April 18 beginning at 5:30 PM. Please make reservations for your time slot by calling (843) 462-2150.

## Field Trip — Botany Bay W.M.A.

» Saturday, April 18, 7 a.m.

Let's try this again! Our October trip had to be canceled, and we promised to reschedule a visit here in the spring. Botany Bay Plantation WMA was officially opened to the public by the SC DNR on July 1, 2008. This former long staple cotton plantation located on Edisto Island is a 4,630-acre jewel which includes a mix of pine-hardwood forests, agricultural fields, coastal wetlands and a barrier island with plenty of beach frontage. A three mile driving tour takes visitors past numerous sites of natural beauty and historical interest (including a wooden ice house dating to the 1800s and tabby structures from the Colonial period), and many walking trails are also available.

Given its diversity of habitats, the property is sure to become a favorite destination for area birders.

Don Jones and Andy Harrison will lead this first-ever CNHS outing to Botany Bay. Meet Don and Andy at 7:00a.m. Saturday, April 18 in the parking lot of the West Ashley Barnes and Noble store (at the intersection of Hwy 61 and Sam Rittenberg Blvd). We'll carpool from there to the site. Bring binoculars/scopes, field guides, water, food/snacks, sunscreen/insect repellent and weather-appropriate clothing. Note that this WMA does NOT have restroom facilities.

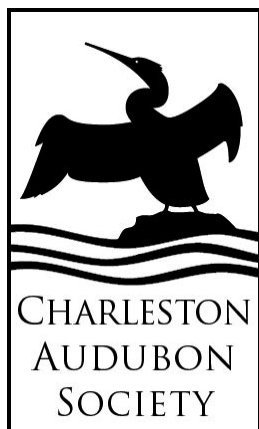
Register with Don at 572-8232 or by e-mail at [Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com](mailto:Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com) by Friday, April 17.

# 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](http://www.CharlestonAudubon.org).

## Carolina Dogs from page 1

be related to the early domesticated dogs which accompanied humans who crossed the Bering Land Bridge to enter North America over 14,000 years ago.

By capturing dogs of this type from the wild and bringing them into captivity where they can be more carefully studied. Several behavioral traits have been discovered that appear unique to these dogs, and many behaviors labeled as primitive are consistently manifested. Such behaviors include pack hierarchy, communal pup rearing, regurgitation for pups, and organized, cooperative hunting.

Dogs from the program of captive breeding have become popular as household pets and several are now owned by persons living in the Charleston area. Dr. Brisbin will be discussing ways in which interested persons might become involved in this work by acquiring puppies which can be made available free of charge to individuals interested in helping to learn more about their ecology, behavior and conservation.

### Curious about these animals?

#### Learn more online:

- » <http://www.uga.edu/srel/edpubs/dogs.html>
- » <http://www.carolinadogs.org>
- » [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolina\\_Dog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolina_Dog)

## Beidler Forest Events from page 2

- » **Hard Core Beidler Bird Walks** – For the serious birder, this walk will take participants to several off-boardwalk sites in search of the elusive Swainson's Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Led by Jeff Mollenhauer, author of the *Falcon Guide to Birds of South Carolina*. Dress for woods trail walking. Cost \$8/person. **April 11, May 30 at 8:30 a.m.**
- » **Night Walks** - Audubon naturalist-guided moonlit walk along the boardwalk through virgin section of Four Holes Swamp. Shine for gators, talk to owls, listen to bats. Cost \$8/person. **April 4th at 7:30 p.m., and May 9th at 8:30 p.m.**

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