



The LESSER SQUAWK

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon Society

www.CharlestonAudubon.org

September–October 2006

Join CNHS and ICBP for Fall Hawk Migration Survey

The International Center for Birds of Prey (ICBP) and the Charleston Natural History Society are partnering to re-open two hawk migration watch stations in coastal SC this fall. The SC Center for Birds of Prey coordinated the survey from '95-'97. We need your help to collect this important data again.

Raptor ID Training, Sept. 6th

If you need to brush up on your identification skills, a workshop on hawk in-flight identification will be offered on Wednesday, Sept. 6, from 6-8 p.m. in the biology lecture hall (Duckett 101) at the The Citadel. (To locate Duckett Hall, a map of the Citadel Campus can be found online at www.citadel.edu/r3/about/map/parking1.shtml).

To reserve your space for the workshop and to take part in this important survey, please call the ICBP office at (843) 928-3494 or email (maria.whitehead@citadel.edu).

— see *HAWK SURVEY* pg. 4

Quick Calendar – CNHS Events:

- 9/6 Hawk ID Training pg 1
- 9/9 Sod Farm Fieldtrip pg 3
- 9/14 Lecture: Hammock Islands pg 1
- 9/24 Caw Caw Fieldtrip pg 3
- 10/12 Lecture: Island Birds pg 2
- 10/14 BP Fieldtrip pg 3
- 10/16 Bird Seed Order Deadline pg 2
- 10/28 McAlhany Survey Fieldtrip pg 3
- 11/15 Note – Wednesday Lecture: Bats!

Learn How Carolina's Hammock Islands Host Birds & More at September Lecture

On Thursday, September 14, our speaker is SCDNR's Billy McCord who will address the important ecological role played by the small islands that dot our coast. South Carolina has several thousand of these small "hammock" islands (999 acres or less) that are surrounded by salt marsh and distributed throughout the Coastal Zone. Most occur in Beaufort, Colleton and Charleston Counties.

These islands have come under focus for development interest, but they have been determined to be rich in ecological value in addition to their aesthetic, storm buffer, cultural and archaeological values. McCord has surveyed about 70 of these islands to date and has recorded an amazing diversity of plants and animals. The islands are highly valuable to Neotropical migratory birds and to breeding painted buntings, and are also the primary sites for several rare plants in SC.

This slide show and talk will focus on the ecological characteristics of these small islands – a walk through the biological diversity from butterflies and dragonflies to mammals – and plants.

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!

President's Welcome Message for 2006

Welcome to an exciting new year with the Charleston Natural History Society! Like most local conservation organizations, we face a growing number of challenges with resources that are stretched more and more each year. For example, budgetary constraints have required us to move to a bi-monthly newsletter, and we are initiating a "bring your own refreshments" policy at our monthly meetings.

However we're still proud to be a very active chapter: we continue to offer high quality programs and outings and are active in the fight to preserve natural environments in SC and beyond; newsletter editor and webmaster Steve Bleezarde is constructing our website, www.charlestonaudubon.org; and dramatic changes are underway at the McAlhany Nature Preserve.

Under the direction of Joe Cockrell, the old field/longleaf pine restoration project is proceeding on schedule, and we have devoted a significant amount of Chapter funds to making much-needed repairs to the cabin – including stabilizing its sagging foundation and replacing the leaky roof, both of which were recently completed. In June our Chapter was awarded a Collaborative Funding Grant from SC Audubon/National Audubon to make improvements to the nature trail. These are timely activities, given that this spring we will be celebrating our 20th year of ownership of this beautiful tract along the

— see *WELCOME* pg 2

October Lecture: Island Birds from Hawaii to the Galapagos

On Thursday, October 12, 2006, we're pleased to welcome internationally recognized author, illustrator and ornithologist, H. Douglas Pratt to Charleston. His talk will be titled *Island Birds: Evolutionary Triumph and Ecological Tragedy*. From the famous Galapagos finches to the honeycreepers of Hawaii, island birds provide extraordinary examples of both the evolutionary power of isolation and the fragile habitats they call home. This is our regular monthly talk, with a reception at 6:30 and speaker starting at 7 p.m. in the second floor auditorium of the County Library, Calhoun St., downtown.



Dr. Pratt resides in Cary, NC, and is Research Curator of Birds at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh. A Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, he specializes in the evolution of birds on islands and

has published scientific papers in a variety of scientific journals. Though having no formal art training, Dr. Pratt is also renowned as a zoological illustrator. He is author and/or illustrator of 11 full-length books and a contributor to others ranging from the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* to *A Field Guide to the Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific*, the multi-volume *Handbook of Birds of the World*, and his recently-published (2005) and most important work, *The Hawaiian Honeycreepers: Drepanidinae* in the Oxford University Press series Bird Families of the World.



He is currently gathering data for a series of papers on species limits in Pacific island birds, revising the Hawaii/Pacific field guide for Princeton University Press, and participating in the North Carolina Birding Trail project.

WELCOME *from pg 1*

Edisto River. We are planning a festive event at McAlhany to commemorate this milestone.

In order to maintain our many functions, we depend as much as ever on fundraising events and contributions of time and labor from Chapter volunteers. We are holding our annual fall birdseed sale in September and October – details and an order form in this newsletter. I encourage all of our members not only to purchase seed, but also to ask other birding enthusiasts they know to place orders. If every member who orders seed through our sale also convinces just one friend, relative or neighbor to order, we could substantially increase the amount of money our Chapter earns!

Volunteers are more important than ever to our success as a Chapter. Just as in past years we will be looking for folks to help with our projects at McAlhany, appearances at events such as the SEWE Expo, and conservation campaigns such as the fight to protect seabird nesting islands.

Development pressures undreamed of just ten years ago are threatening natural areas throughout the SC Lowcountry. These have included attempts to build bridges to marsh hummock islands along the coast in order to build homes there, too. Our September speaker, SC DNR Biologist Billy McCord, will describe the many (sometimes surprising) species of plants and animals that live on or make use of these small but important habitats. I hope to see you at that lecture and also at our October meeting (when our speaker will be Doug Pratt, author of "The Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific"). We have some great field trips planned for September and October – come see some good birds and enjoy the company of fellow birders – and bring a friend or two! Thanks to Cornelia Carrier (Programs) and Don Jones (Outings) for arranging these events. If you have suggestions or comments, or are interested in volunteering, don't hesitate to contact me or another Board member.

– Andy Harrison phone: 843 795-6934
Email: parula23@aol.com

Carolina Bird Club Meeting In Savannah, GA This Fall

Following the recent tradition of holding CBC meetings in excellent birding locales slightly outside the boundaries of the Carolinas, the fall 2006 meeting is scheduled for Savannah, Georgia from Sept. 29 to Oct. 1. The Savannah area and adjacent southeastern coast of SC promises opportunities to visit old favorites including the ACE Basin, Tybee Island and Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, among many others. This should be an excellent time for passerine migrants along the coast, and most of the "specialty" birds of the southern coast will be present.



Learn more about the meeting and the CBC online: www.carolinabirdclub.org.

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. To volunteer, contact: Sue Schweikart, coastal coordinator, 843-727-2078, or Bill Marshall, 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

(Please note that this is the Sept./Oct. issue of The Lesser Squawk: the next issue will cover Nov./Dec. Please mark October events on your calendar now! Up-to-date calendar items will also be posted online: www.charlestonaudubon.org)

LECTURES:

Thurs. September 14

- » Billy McCord
- » SCDNR
- » Hummock Island Wildlife & Ecology
See story, pg 1.

Thurs. October 12

- » Dr. H. Douglas Pratt
- » NC Natural Sciences Museum
- » Island Birds: Diversity in Danger
See story, pg 2.

Wed. November 15

- » BATS!
Due to the Veterans Day holiday we're scheduled to meet on the third Wednesday in November – please note the change.

FIELDTRIPS:

Sat. September 9, 7:30 a.m.

- » Sod Farms
During the months of August and September the sod farms near Orangeburg, SC are a well-known hotspot for observing migrating shorebirds – especially if the fields have been soaked by late summer rains. Pectoral sandpipers and “peeps” such as Least Sandpipers are frequently seen here, and in past years Upland Sandpipers, Buff-breasted Sandpipers and American Golden-Plovers have also made appearances. In addition to the shorebirds, Horned Larks, Common Ground-Doves and numerous hawk and swallow species are often observed at the sod farms. Weedy roadsides with late-summer flowers make for good butterfly watching, too!

Meet Andy at 7:30 a.m. Saturday, September 9 in the Summerville Wal-Mart parking lot (behind Hardee's), off I-26 at exit 199A. We'll try to carpool as much as possible (it takes about forty-five min-

utes to get there). 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, September 8.

NOTE THAT THIS TRIP TAKES PLACE BEFORE OUR FIRST MEMBERSHIP MEETING – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, September 24, 9 a.m.

- » Caw Caw County Park
Our second field trip will be closer to home as we visit Charleston County Parks Caw Caw Interpretive Center on Sunday Sept. 24th. Plan to meet the Group at 9:00 a.m. (park opening) in the parking lot near the headquarters building.

This is a great time of year to see migrating warblers so bring your field guides, binoculars, bug spray (just in case) and lunch. There is a \$1 entry fee. Caw Caw is located on U.S. 17 near Ravenel. Please register with Don Jones by Sept. 23 if you plan to attend (843 572 8232 or Birdfrogdjjj@aol.com).

Sat. October 14, 7 a.m.

- » BP Property
On Sat. Oct. 14 at 7:00 a.m. we will meet at our usual spot in the Lows' parking lot, off US 17, in Mt Pleasant. We will car pool to the BP property on the east side of the Cooper, near Cainhoy.

This large tract of land is the former location of the Grove Plantation and is not generally open to the public. There are diverse habitats and an opportunity to see wading birds, raptors and winter residents such as sparrows, pipits, and finches.

Bring binoculars, field guides and a lunch. If you plan to attend contact Don Jones by Oct. 13 (843 572-8232 Birdfrogdjjj@aol.com).

Sat. October 28, 7:30 a.m.

- » McAlhany Flora/Fauna Survey
Julian Harrison continues bi-monthly outings to survey the fauna and flora of the McAlhany Nature Preserve on Saturday, Oct. 28th. Everyone's welcome, and no special expertise is needed. Julian and Andy will be able to point out a great deal of plant and animal diversity.

These trips may last until mid or late afternoon (although you're welcome to leave early if you like). Bring water, lunch/snacks, binoculars, guides and cameras (digital cameras are helpful for transferring photographs to our website).

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, planning to arrive by 9:00 a.m. or before. Please contact Julian (843-795-1694 or harrisonj@cofc.edu) no later than Friday, Oct. 27, if you plan to participate.

Bird Seed Sale Our #1 Fundraiser

Our annual birdseed sale is a best chance for you to help the chapter raise money. 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 postmarked by October 16. 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. Extra order forms can be downloaded from www.CharlestonAudubon.org, or picked-up at the Sept. and Oct. lecture 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 3 thru Sunday the 12th. Contact Mike Hutchinson (h:884-7746 mhutchinson15@comcast.net), or Steve Bleezarde (h:406-2061 steve@bleezarde.com) with any questions you have about the sale.

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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.

Citizen Science Projects Make the Most of Our Observations

From a over century of Christmas Bird Counts, to this year's South Carolina Coastal Hawk Migration Survey, the observations of everyday birdwatchers can make the difference – collecting valuable data that affects research, development, public policy and more. Here are some more ways to become involved:

A Swift Night Out – www.chimneyswifts.org

This is continent-wide effort to gather data on Chimney Swift populations. Make your observations over the weekend, Sept. 8–10. Visit their website for more info.

Piping Plovers in Crisis – astallings@audubon.org

Piping Plovers are among the most at risk birds we see along our shores. With less than 6,000 in the world, this threatened species can benefit from your help. Specific local development threatens habitat used by the plovers and SC Audubon is hoping to document the problem. If you can take the time to walk the beach with a camera and monitor activity in critical habitat, please contact April Stallings: 843-462-2150 (Tue./Wed), 803-496-3108 (Mon., Thurs., Fri.)



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

CHECK ONE: NEW MEMBER GIFT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

THIS IS A GIFT FROM:

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MAIL THIS COUPON AND YOUR CHECK TO:

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[RENEWALS MUST INCLUDE THE 20-DIGIT MEMBER NUMBER FROM YOUR AUDUBON ADDRESS LABEL]

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

HAWK SURVEY *continued from pg. 1*

Volunteers will sign-up for 2-hour shifts 10 a.m.–12 noon and 1:30–3:30 p.m. Observations will be collected from September 16 thru November 1. We will schedule volunteer hours in advance to optimize our efforts. The sites are between Charleston and Georgetown, at Tibwin Plantation and the ICBP hack box.

SC Coastal Hawk Migration Survey data will be submitted to a national monitoring database and published annually in Hawk Migration Studies by the Hawk Migration Association of North America. This data contributes to conservation of birds of prey by monitoring regional and national population trends, identifying migratory pathways and critical migratory habitat.