



The LESSER SQUAWK

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon Society

www.CharlestonAudubon.org

September–October 2007

President's Welcome Notes

We are enduring the blazing-hot dog days of summer as I write this, but fall migration season and a new year for the Charleston Natural History Society are approaching quickly – and there is a lot going on! Our first speaker of the year is Maria Whitehead, who will present a Hawk In-Flight identification workshop in preparation for the 2007 SC Coastal Hawk Migration Survey (coordinated with the International Center for Birds of Prey). Volunteers are needed to count hawks during the observation period (September 1 – November 30).

Our own CNHS Piping Plover survey team (part of our commitment to the SC Shorebird Survey) is also very active now, conducting two shorebird surveys per month at the SC-10 Critical Habitat area on Seabrook Island. We've already spotted some banded PIPL (and American Oystercatchers too) on our late summer surveys. There are some excellent field trips planned for September and October, including visits to the Orangeburg Sod Farms, Patriot's Point/Pitt Street Bridge and Parris Island.

McAlhany Celebrates 20 Years

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 13 – we will be holding a 20th anniversary celebration of the dedication of our McAlhany Nature Preserve on that date (more details pg 1). This

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Quick Calendar – Upcoming Events:

- 9/8 Sod Farm Fieldtrip pg 3
- 9/12 Lecture: Hawk Migration pg 1
- 9/22 Patriots Point Fieldtrip pg 3
- 10/6 Parris Island Fieldtrip pg 3
- 10/10 Lecture: Global Warming pg 3
- 10/13 McAlhany Anniversary BBQ pg 1
- 10/22 Bird Seed Orders Due see insert

Learn to ID Raptors in Flight and Prepare for Fall Hawk Migration Watch at September 12 Lecture

On Wednesday, September 12, our speaker is the Nature Conservancy's Maria Whitehead who will present slides, video and handouts to help us all brush-up on or raptor identification skills. In addition to presenting ID tips based on silhouettes, flight patterns and plumage, she will report on last year's migration watch.

During Fall 2006, the International Center for Birds of Prey (ICBP) and our chapter partnered to re-open two hawk migration watch stations in coastal South Carolina. The effort is on to sign-up volunteers for this Fall.

During the 2007 Hawk Watch the focus will be on a single watch station. Volunteers will sign-up for morning or afternoon observation hours. Observations will be made between September 1 and December 1. All volunteer hours will be scheduled in advance to maximize efficiency. The watch station will be located in Awendaw, at the International Center for Birds of Prey hack box.

SC Coastal Hawk Migration Survey data is 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.

To learn more and view Fall 2006 data, go to <http://hawkcount.org>.

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!

Anniversary BBQ Celebration at McAlhany

Come and celebrate the 20th anniversary of the dedication of the McAlhany Nature Preserve on Saturday, October 13th! Mrs. Cleo T. McAlhany donated this beautiful 318 acre property on the Edisto River to CNHS in 1986, and it was dedicated as a nature preserve in honor of Mrs. McAlhany's late husband Marvin McAlhany on January 18, 1987.

The gates to the property will open at 9 a.m. for chapter members and guests, and around midday we will enjoy some delicious barbecue from Duke's Barbecue in Ridgeville (as well as cole slaw and other side dishes). Soft drinks etc. will also be provided, and for the vegetarians among us we will offer a few non-meat dishes. You are welcome to BYOB and/or to bring a dessert or side dish of your own. To mark the occasion there will be some brief remarks about the history of the property, the people who have played a role in that history, and what is going on there today.

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Spring Bird Count Report: Birdathon and Count Successful

This past year we linked the Charleston Spring Count to a fund-raising Birdathon, and this proved to be a very successful combination. Despite unfavorable weather conditions, on May 6 our eight birding parties tallied 140 species in the 15-mile diameter count circle. Our 43 Birdathon donors contributed over \$1700 to CNHS, and in late June we sent a check for \$1000 to SC Audubon to help fund the work of Stacey Stephan, an intern hired to assist SC DNR biologists post signs and monitor seabird and wading bird nesting success at numerous coastal islands, including Deveaux Bank, Crab Bank and Bird Key Stono.

Each group observed some good birds during the Spring Count, but the honor of highest party total (80 species) goes to the Bulls Island team, which was led by Felicia Sanders and included Mary-Catherine Martin and Kerri Dikun. Among the species they recorded were: 1 Reddish Egret, 4 White-rumped Sandpipers, 2 Still Sandpipers, 3 Piping Plovers and 133 Red Knots. Other notable party sightings included the fly-over Red-throated Loon, 2 Northern Bobwhites, and 18 Painted Buntings observed by Burton Moore as he covered the grounds of the International Center for Birds of Prey and Sewee Road. The Dewees Island party (Kenneth Priester and Jeremy and Kimberley Bendt) recorded 14 Mottled Ducks, and on Capers Island Hal Currey and Jerry White saw 18 Whimbrel. Kentucky Warblers were observed in both Laurel Hill (Bob Chinn and Virginia Flatau) and Ion Swamp (Andy Harrison, who also recorded a Swainson's Warbler, 3 Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and 4 Bachman's Sparrows). The party led by Don Jones (with Becky Holmes, Bernie Lundquist, Tom Snowden and Bill Valentine) birding Guerin's Bridge Road saw the only Loggerhead Shrike of the day, and Craig Watson observed some 1200 Tree Swallows in the Sewee Preserve/Porcher's Bluff area. The early morning rain and high winds in the afternoon probably affected the overall count total, which was lower by 20 species than in 2006.

Most Birdathon donors contributed a set amount to the cause, but a few made pledges based on the birding total. The three high-ranking donors were Norm Brunswig, Jim Snowden and Andy Harrison. However, all of the contributions made by our Birdathon participants were vitally important to CNHS and to funding Ms. Stephan. During her three-month internship with SC DNR she helped Felicia Sanders and Mark Spinks post "no trespassing" signs and count nests on a number of islands along the coast. They were very impressed with her work, and the data they gathered confirms that nesting birds are returning in large numbers to Deveaux Bank, Crab Bank and Bird Key Stono – islands that were closed to the public last year in a major conservation victory (in which CNHS members played a major role).

Thanks to all of our Spring Count participants and Birdathon donors – through your efforts we were able to conduct the annual migration survey and, at the same time, raise significant funds for both CNHS activities and to help ensure the survival of our colonial nesting seabird and wading bird populations. We plan to repeat the combined Spring Count/Birdathon next year. If you haven't participated in a count before, consider joining us – it's a lot of fun and a good way to learn birds!

Volunteers to Sweep SC Waters, CNHS to Clean-up Edisto

Beach Sweep/River Sweep is South Carolina's largest one-day volunteer cleanup event. Saturday, September 15, 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

Our own Joe Cockrell has signed-up conduct a sweep along 1.5 miles of the Edisto River at the McAlhany Preserve. Volunteers will be working out of canoes and johnboat. If you would like to participate at McAlhany, contact Joe (607-1070).

To volunteer elsewhere in the Lowcountry, contact: Sue Schweikart, coastal coordinator, 843-953-2078, or Dave Lansbury, inland coordinator, 843-953-9335

More info. online:

» <http://www.scseagrant.org/Content/?cid=49>

President – *continued from page 1*

summer we finalized the transfer of the Wannamaker Nature Preserve to the Columbia Audubon Society. Last year the Board had decided that we could no longer manage both properties effectively, and now we can focus our energy on McAlhany – where we have a number of major restoration and improvement projects in progress.

Once again we are holding our annual fall Birdseed Sale – be sure to place your orders soon, and encourage your birding friends and neighbors to do so too! We depend heavily on fundraising events and contributions of time and labor from Chapter volunteers in order to maintain our many functions. While on that subject I'd like to welcome two newcomers to the CNHS Board: Paul Nolan and Cathy Miller. Paul has offered to chair a small grants committee, and Cathy will be taking over the post of Secretary from Donna Robertson. I'd also like to thank Donna for her excellent work this past year.

As always, the upcoming year promises to be active with respect to conservation issues. A number of CNHS and SC Audubon members attended the recent public hearing held by MeadWestvaco to seek input concerning their proposal to develop the 72,000 acre East Edisto tract. Because of its conservation value (used by species such as the Swallow-tailed Kite and Wayne's Black-throated Green Warbler), this land is actually part of a larger Important Bird Area (IBA) – a designation the company itself had sought from SC Audubon not many years ago. In the break-out portion of the meeting we urged company representatives to consider the "no development" option (selling all or large portions to TNC or a similar entity). Once Meadwestvaco has prepared a plan for East Edisto they will be holding more public hearings, and I encourage you to attend and share your opinions.

I look forward to seeing you this fall at a lecture or fieldtrip, and hope you can attend the anniversary celebration at McAlhany! If you have suggestions or comments, or are interested in volunteering, don't hesitate to contact me or another Board member.

– Andy Harrison

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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:

Wed. September 12

- » Maria Whitehead
 - » Nature Conservancy/ICBP
 - » Hawk Migration, Identification
- See story, pg 1.

Wed. October 10

- » Toni Reale and John Ramsburgh
 - » Global Warming Update
- How will global warming affect South Carolina? At our October 10 meeting we'll watch a 12 minute video, "Treasured Places in Peril, Global Warming Impacts on the Southeast." Then Toni Reale, adjunct professor of Geology at the College of Charleston, will talk about the science of global warming with visuals about the rise of CO₂ in our atmosphere. John Ramsburgh, the Heatison project manager for the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, will then bring us up to date on the politics of global warming and how we, as bird lovers and concerned citizens, can effect change.

FIELDTRIPS:

Sat. September 8, 7:00 a.m.

- » Sod Farms
- Join Don Jones on September 8th on our first field trip of the season. Our destination will be the sod farms near Orangeburg. There is a possibility of seeing several rarities, including; Upland Sandpiper, Buff-breasted and Pectoral Sandpiper and American Golden- Plover. Ground Doves, Horned Larks and several species of swallows should also be present. This location offers easy roadside birding so not a lot of walking involved.
- We will meet at 7:00 a.m. in

Summerville, in the small parking lot between 17A and the frontage Rd. of the Wal- Mart shopping center, and car pool from there. Bring a lunch, binoculars, field guide and dress for the weather.

To register contact Don at 572-8232 or Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com prior to Sept, 8th.

Saturday, September 22, 7 a.m.

» Patriots Point/Pitt Street

On Saturday September, 22nd we'll get together for some birding close to home. Our meeting place will be the parking lot for the driving range at Patriots Point golf course at 7:00 a.m. From there we'll check out the nature trail and hopefully see some migrating warblers. Then on to the Pitt Street Bridge where we always see lots of good birds, including herons, egrets, plovers and several species of gulls and terns and maybe some surprises given that the fall migration is at its' peak.

If you're familiar with these areas you know that this is casual birding at its best. Well maintained trails and boardwalk, great views of the harbor and as an added bonus we will get together at a local restaurant for lunch afterwards. This is a great opportunity to introduce a family member or friend to birding; and who knows what might happen.

To register, contact Don Jones prior to the 22nd. eMail Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com or phone 572-8232.

Sat. October 6, 7 a.m.

» Parris Island

Join Bob Chinn for a trip to Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, near Beaufort, SC. Parris Island has a variety of habitats including; a large saltwater pond, extensive marshes, maritime forest, golf course, rivers, tidal creeks and some upland woods. We should see wood storks, eagles, osprey, shorebirds, waders, some migrant warblers and local residents. One year, we saw 2 manatees in the Broad River. Nearby is Ribaults Monument, named for a 1500s French colony, some Spanish ruins and ongoing archeological dig.

The weather could still be pretty hot, so dress accordingly. There is not a lot of walking involved, so comfortable shoes are O.K. Water, food and sanitary facilities are available, but food service on Saturdays is very limited.

Meet Bob at 6:45 a.m., Saturday, Oct. 6, 2007, at the OLD Wal-mart in West Ashley. (Hwy 61 Xpressway and Magwood, directly across from St. Francis hospital) We will car-pool as much as possible. Bring a valid ID for entrance to the Depot. Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch/snacks, water and insect repellent.

Register with Bob by Friday, October 5, 2007 at 843-552-7884 -- email bobchinn@comcast.net or Don Jones @ 572-8232, or Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com.

Annual Bird Seed Sale and 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 22. Sell some seed to your friends, coworkers or neighbors! 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 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 9 thru Sunday the 18th. (We're still working out details with the Mt. Pleasant store - if their is any change we will contact you.) Contact Mike Hutchinson (h:884-7746 mhutchinson15@comcast.net), or Steve Bleezarde (h:406-2061 steve@charlestonaudubon.org) with any questions you have about the sale.

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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.

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CNHS entered a conservation easement agreement with the Lowcountry Open Land Trust on December 19, 2001 in order to ensure that McAlhany remains undeveloped. Over the past several years our chapter has renewed its commitment to the management of the preserve. There is a major long-term longleaf pine and native grass restoration project in progress in old field area across Wire Road, and we have begun to make improvements to the trail system (and hope to add new trails in the future). Before and after lunch there will be opportunities to observe the longleaf pine restoration area and/or to

walk the trail around the oxbow lake to the Edisto River. Early fall is a very pleasant time to visit McAlhany, as temperatures have begun to moderate but wildflowers and migrant bird species are still abundant.

Directions to the McAlhany Nature Preserve can be found below.

Please RSVP by Sunday, September 30 to Tom Snowden (csnowden@sc.rr.com, or 843 875-3445), so that we know how much barbecue to order. We look forward to seeing you at the McAlhany anniversary celebration!



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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BOULDER, CO 80323-1003

THIS MEMBERSHIP IS FOR:

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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

DIRECTIONS TO McALHANY:

The McAlhany preserve is located in upper Dorchester County on the Edisto River, about an hour's drive from downtown: Take Hwy. 61, Hwy. 78 or I-26 to Hwy 15. Go to the small town of Grover which is about 10 miles south of St. George. Turn west on Wire Road, cross over I-95 and continue for several miles and look for our signs on the left (the main sign is set-back somewhat, so look carefully.)