

THE LESSER SQUAWK

www.charlestonaudubon.org

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon &
Natural History Society

DON'T MISS EVENTS!

Lecture (Sep 11th): How "Green" are Green Household Products?

We kick off our lecture series **Wednesday, September 11th from 6-8 pm, in the Duckett Hall Biology Auditorium (room 101) on the campus of the Citadel** ([map](#)). We welcome **Dr. John Weinstein**, Head of the Department of Biology at The Citadel, as he speaks on how "green" your green household products are.



Photo from the Citadel

Although it is generally assumed that green household products contain individual ingredients that are less toxic and/or more degradable than conventional formulations, little research on this topic has been conducted. Dr. Weinstein will present recent findings from a study he conducted that examined the toxicity of several green household products.

Using either larvae of the estuarine **daggerblade grass shrimp** (*Palaemonetes pugio*), or adults of the **freshwater cladoceran** (*Daphnia magna*), seven green product formulations (Seventh Generation Dishwashing Gel, Green Works All-Purpose Cleaner, Green Works Dish Detergent, Earth Options Insect Killer, Tom's Mouthwash, Martha Stewart Bathroom Cleaner, and Seventh Generation Laundry Detergent) were compared to that of categorically equivalent products using 48-hour toxicity tests. Of the seven categories of household products tested, in only two cases were the green products less toxic than either of the conventional formulations. In three cases, there was no difference in the toxicity between the green products and the conventional formulations. And, in one case, the green product was more toxic than both tested conventional products.

This research demonstrates that green household product formulations are not necessarily less toxic and/or more degradable than their conventional counterparts. Join us to find out more about Dr. Weinstein's research. We will begin at 6 PM as usual, with snacks and socializing before the presentation begins at 6:30; feel free to bring a snack to share.

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, Sep 11th, 6-8 pm

LECTURE: How "Green" are Green Household Products

For more information see article to the left.

Saturday, Sep 14th, 7am-3pm

FIELD TRIP: Orangeburg Sod Farms

To sign-up or for more information see page 3.

Saturday, Sep 28th, 7am-2pm

FIELD TRIP: Patriot's Point and the Pitt Street Causeway

For more information see article on page 4.

Give Us a Call!



Stay on top of upcoming events, even without internet access; we're trying out a telephone call-in system.

Call 843-720-9736 (843-720-WREN) each month to hear a listing of upcoming lectures, field trips, and other events.

President's Notes

Far to the north of us the days are already getting noticeably shorter, temperatures are dropping a bit, and a whole variety of animals are preparing for the winter. Some of them, of course, choose to 'get out of Dodge', so to speak, and migrate to warmer climes. That's actually been going on for well over a month now as the shorebirds headed southward and passed through the Lowcountry beginning in July; warblers are being seen more regularly now and soon we won't be able to take a short walk without being scolded by a dozen or more yellow-rumped warblers. Other animals' strategy is to stick around, but hibernate through the winter—[chipmunks and black bears](#) come to mind as common animals that take this approach, but [bats](#) too go into a serious deep sleep. Out of all these approaches to the off season, Charleston Audubon's is closest to that of the chipmunk, in that our activity slows during the summer but never entirely ceases.

Since publication of the last Squawk we've had a number of activities going on. In mid-May, Brian Reid organized and ran a very successful [BioBlitz](#), in which we hosted ~50 people who came from several states to begin an inventory of all living things found in our [McAlhany Nature Preserve](#). The results are still coming in, as many of the samples collected at the event require detailed examination before a positive ID can be made, but we added several birds and reptiles to our already impressive list. More impressively, we added over 70 species of dragonflies and damselflies to the property's inventory and the list of beetles may grow into the hundreds. Stay tuned for more details.

Our educational outreach continued as well, including [hosting a dozen graduate students](#) from the College of Charleston's Graduate Program in



Marine Biology. The students brought a trailer full of kayaks with them, and took advantage of the [record high waters](#) to explore the cypress swamps in MNP's southeast corner. Later in July, we sponsored a group of 20, mostly elementary-school kids and their chaperones, from the [YWCA's Explore! Summer camp](#) as they took a trip to the SC Aquarium. Our Seniors and Songbirds program delivered natural history information to several senior centers around the area as well. Of course, our 'hibernation' was interrupted by the need to plan for the coming year's field trips, lectures, and fundraisers. Details of those activities can be found elsewhere within this issue of the Squawk, but both series (field trips and lectures) seem likely to be as interesting and engaging as in the past. I'll have to miss some of them as I work on a research sabbatical, but I hope you'll attend as many as possible. In the meantime, watch your mailbox and our email announcements for details of our upcoming Fall bird seed sale fundraiser, and please support us to the fullest extent that you can.

Welcome back to another year of natural history programming beginning days from now, and I'll see you next month!

Paul Nolan
paulnolancnhs@gmail.com

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, Oct 9th, 6-8pm

LECTURE: On the Trail of the Toco Toucan

For more information, see article on page 4.

Sunday, Oct 13th, 7am-3pm

FIELD TRIP: Botany Bay WMA

For more information, see article on page 5.

Saturday, Oct 26th, 8:30am-3pm

FIELD TRIP: Old Santee Canal Park

For more information, see article on page 5.

Saturday, Nov 9th, 6:30am-4pm

FIELD TRIP: Savannah NWR

For more information, see article on page 6.

Wednesday, Nov 13th, 6-8pm

LECTURE: Backyard Gardening for Wildlife

For more information, see article on page 6.

Fall Field Trip Kickoff - Orangeburg Sod Farms

We'll kick off a new season of field trips on **Saturday, September 14th**, with a visit to the **Super Sod Farm near Orangeburg, SC** for some inland shorebirding. Migrating shorebirds, including species such as [Upland](#), [Pectoral](#) and [Buff-breasted Sandpipers](#) and [American Golden Plovers](#), regularly stop over in small numbers at this site in late summer and early fall – especially after a heavy rain, when the grassy fields are wet and mud puddles are plentiful. Rarities such as [Baird's Sandpiper](#), [Sharp-tailed Sandpiper](#) and [Wilson's Phalarope](#) have also been observed here.



Photo by Andy Harrison: [Upland Sandpiper](#)

In addition to shorebirds, we are likely to see [Horned Larks](#), [Common Ground Doves](#), and several species of swallows (possibly [Bank](#) or [Cliff Swallows](#)) and various raptors. The birding will be mainly from the roadside, so a minimum amount of walking is required. There are no restrooms or picnic facilities on the site, so we'll eat lunch as we bird (gas stations with convenience stores are not far away, however).

Bring food and water, your birding gear (a scope, if you have one, is highly recommended), and dress for the weather – bug spray and sunscreen might also prove useful. The meeting time and location for the trip will be 7 AM in the small parking lot next to the First Citizens Bank in front of the Summerville Walmart ([map](#)). If you plan to attend, please register with Andy Harrison prior to September 14, at parula23@aol.com or 843 795-6934.

Other Interesting Events in the Lowcountry:

- [Nightwalks at Beidler Forest](#)
- [Bird of Prey Raptor Center](#)
- [Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center](#)
- [Charleston County Parks & Recreation Commission](#)

Calendar of Events

Sunday, Dec 8th, 2-5pm

EVENT: Holiday party and oyster roast fundraiser

Come join us at Bowen's Island as we continue our tradition of fun holiday parties, good food, and great music. We'll have multiple pots of chili and pans of cornbread, plus desserts to go along with all of the best Lowcountry oysters you care to eat. Bring your checkbook or credit card too, because we'll have lots of good items to bid on in a silent auction. See you there! Details of payment to follow here, plus we'll mail a flyer as the date gets closer.

Saturday, Dec 14th, 7am-4pm

FIELD TRIP: Huntington Beach State Park

This is one of the best birding spots on the South Carolina coast. The site contains over 3000 acres of fresh water impoundments, salt marsh, and ocean beach. We usually see around 60 species of birds including ducks and other waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, gulls, terns, eagles, other raptors, and sparrows. Over 300 species of birds have been recorded at the park and it's a great place to look for rarities such as Purple Sandpipers, Great Cormorants, and Piping Plovers.

If you plan to attend, please register with Andy Harrison prior to December 14 at parula23@aol.com or 795-6934.

More Information

For more information check out our calendar online: www.charlestonaudubon.org/calendar.html or join our gmail calendar by searching for CNHS. To attend field trips, please register with Andy Harrison prior to the scheduled dates: parula23@aol.com or 843.795.6934.

FIELD TRIP (Sep 28th): Patriot's Point and the Pitt Street Causeway

During fall migration, two Charleston Harbor birding hotspots are the scrubby remnant forest and fields at Patriot's Point and the old Pitt Street Causeway. We'll visit both sites on **Saturday, September 28**, starting with Patriot's Point. This is a well-known "migrant trap" for warblers, vireos and other fall migrants – they often stop and stock up on abundant insects and berries before crossing Charleston Harbor. Although the quality of birding is usually weather-dependent (best after a passing front), some rare species have been spotted here, including Connecticut and Mourning Warblers. For the past several years Clay-colored Sparrows have frequented the brush pile at the end of the golf course driving range. The brush pile was recently removed, unfortunately, but we'll see what we can find.

After spending a couple of hours at Patriot's Point, we'll head over to the Pitt Street Causeway to look for shorebirds, gulls, terns, wading birds and marsh sparrows. We'll be arriving an hour or so after low tide, and so the mud flats should still be extensive (and hopefully full of peeps). This is a great spot to see Marbled Godwits and American Oystercatchers, and if we're lucky we may observe a Reddish Egret doing its famous "dance." Clapper Rails are also frequently spotted here, and we may find a Seaside Sparrow or Marsh Wren amongst the Spartina. For those interested, we'll follow a busy morning of birding with an optional lunch at a local restaurant on Shem Creek (probably the Water's Edge). Hopefully we'll have built up an appetite with some great sightings to discuss!

We'll meet at 7:00 AM in front of the Wild Birds Unlimited store in the Moultrie Plaza shopping center parking lot (on Coleman Blvd. in Mount Pleasant) and carpool from there to our first stop. If you plan to attend, please register with Andy Harrison prior to September 28 at parula23@aol.com or 843 795-6934. Harrison prior to September 28 at parula23@aol.com or 843 795-6934.



Photo from www.patriotspoint.org

LECTURE (Oct 9th): On the Trail of the Toco Toucan – Birding in Paraguay and Brazil

Help us welcome **Andy Harrison on October 9th, from 6-8 pm**, as he speaks to the group about birding in Paraguay and Brazil. Situated in the heart of South America, Paraguay is a nation rich in cultural and natural history but unfamiliar to most North Americans. According to the official checklist of the Birds of Paraguay published by the Asociacion Guyra Paraguay (the national birding organization), over 700 species have been observed in this land-locked country surrounded by rivers. During the summers of 2010 and 2012, Andy Harrison was invited by friends to travel to Paraguay, staying with them in their family home in Asuncion and birding with them there and around the country. They traveled south to visit the wetlands near Pilar and north to explore the Chaco, Paraguay's vast "Green Hell" (but a region famous for its wildlife), and Andy attended a Guyra field trip to the Reserva de Mbatovi. In 2012 he and his friends also visited Foz do Iguacu and the Parque Nacional do Iguacu in Brazil, home to its world-famous waterfalls – larger than those at Niagara!

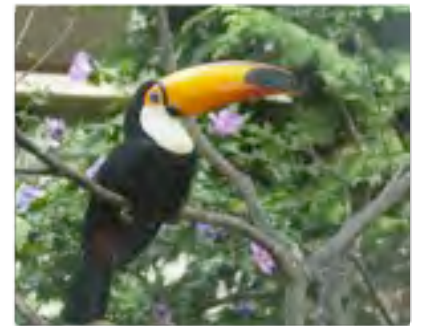


Photo from wikipedia

Andy grew up in the Charleston area and was introduced at an early age to the world of natural history and birding. His interests in birding also led him to served Charleston Audubon President and Programs Coordinator. He earned a B.S. at Davidson College in 1985 and an M.S. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1988. Since 1996 he has been employed with the USDA Forest Service, for the last eight years as a Hydrology Technician working primarily on the Santee Experimental Forest near Cordesville, SC. Andy has been active with Charleston Audubon for many years and currently serves as its Field Trip Coordinator and Spring Bird Count compiler. In past years he has also served as President and Programs Coordinator. We will begin at 6 PM as usual, with snacks and socializing before the presentation begins at 6:30; feel free to bring a snack to share.

FIELD TRIP (Oct 13th): Botany Bay Plantation WMA

On **Sunday, October 13** Steve Moore will, once again, lead our group on a birding tour of Botany Bay Plantation WMA. Shorebirds and migrant songbirds will be the primary targets of the day, but this 4687 acre property on Edisto Island has a lot to offer. There is a three-mile loop road that winds through and past numerous different habitats, including mixed pine-hardwoods forest, agricultural fields, and coastal wetlands and marshes. A short causeway provides access across a marsh and through maritime forest to a stretch of front beach – we'll be there at low tide, and hopefully some shorebirds will too!

In addition to its beautiful natural areas, Botany Bay also offers some interesting cultural resources: a 19th century Gothic Revival style ice house, an overgrown Japanese garden (first of its kind in North America), and outbuildings and ruins of the two main plantation houses that existed on the property in the 1800's, Bleak Hall and Sea Cloud. More information about Botany Bay can be found [here](#).

The meeting time and location for this trip will be 7 AM in the Food Lion in Ravenel, SC ([map](#)). Bring food and water, your birding gear, and dress for the weather. The path to the beach is approximately ¼ mile long, and there may be a moderate amount of walking on the beach. There are no restrooms or picnic facilities on the site, and all trash must be removed – pack it in, pack it out! If you plan to attend, please register with Steve Moore prior to October 13, 2013 at smoore851@gmail.com or 843 327-4367.



Field Trip (26 Oct): Old Santee Canal Park

Join us for birding at the **Old Santee Canal Park, Saturday, October 26, 8:30am – 3pm**. Completed in 1800, the 22-mile long Santee Canal is mostly invisible now, submerged under the waters of Lake Moultrie. In its heyday it provided passage to boats from the Santee River to the Cooper River via sets of locks. Facing droughts and increasing competition from the railroads, the Canal lost its charter in 1850. A remnant portion of the Canal can be found at Biggin Creek in Moncks Corner, where it joins the headwaters of the Cooper River.

The 195-acre Old Santee Canal Park was created in 1989 around this cultural artifact, but it also preserves an area of great natural beauty that can be very good for birding. There are four miles of boardwalks and trails that wind through the backwaters of Biggin Creek and the surrounding cypress/tupelo swamp, and other park attractions include the Stony Landing House (1843) and a small but informative Interpretive Center. We may see some late migrant warblers, as well as many of the expected winter birds in this habitat.

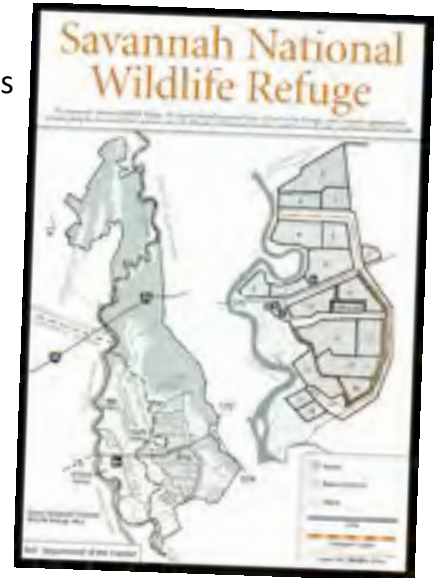


There is a \$3 per person admission fee for ages 7 – 64, \$2 for those 65 and above (and free for children less than 6 years old). We'll meet at 8:30 AM in the small parking lot next to the First Citizens Bank in front of the Summerville Walmart ([map](#)). If you plan to attend, please register with Andy Harrison prior to October 26 at parula23@aol.com or 843 795-6934.

FIELD TRIP (Nov 9th): Savannah NWR

Cathy Miller will lead our group on a visit to [Savannah National Wildlife Refuge](#) this year on **Saturday, November 9, from 6:30 am - 4pm**. The refuge is a great place to see wintering waterfowl, as well as wading birds such as herons, egrets, bitterns, rails and shorebirds. Raptors should also put on a good show. In addition, we have a chance to see some early winter sparrows and perhaps a few late migrant or rare wintering warblers (last year our group got great looks at a [Le Conte's Sparrow](#) here).

There is a four mile loop road (the Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive) that will take us past freshwater impoundments, salt marsh, tidal creeks and bottomland hardwood forests. The birding will be mostly from the roadside, so there will be a minimum amount of walking on this trip. The meeting time and place for the trip will be 6:30 AM in the Food Lion parking in Ravenel, SC ([map](#)). We'll carpool from there for the 40 mile drive to the refuge.



Bring food and water, your birding gear (especially a scope if you have one), and dress for the weather. There are restrooms but no picnic facilities on the site. Depending on conditions, we will continue birding until mid-afternoon, which should get us home before dark. If you plan to attend, **please register with Cathy prior to November 9** at mmemiller.cathy@gmail.com or (843) 452-4368.

Lecture (13 Nov): Backyard Gardening for Wildlife: it all Starts with Native Plants

Colette Degarady will speak about how to create a more natural habitat in your own backyard to promote wildlife by incorporating more native plants. The benefits of viewing wildlife are one great aspect but another is reducing the maintenance required to maintain your backyard. Learn more about native plants by visiting the [SC Native Plant Society](#).

Colette DeGarady is the Senior Conservation Ecologist with the SC chapter of The Nature Conservancy and resides in Mt Pleasant. She graduated from Clemson University with a BS in wildlife biology and holds a master's degree from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in Zoology. She is an active board member of both the SC Native Plant Society and SC Exotic Pest Plant Council. Much of her work with The Nature Conservancy involves restoration and management of natural habitats.



Photo from www.scnps.org



Photo from www.scnps.org

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Species Highlight: Piping Plover

The coastal regions of Long Island host a population of about 200 pairs of nesting [piping plovers](#) (*Charadrius melodus*). These small, sandpiper sized birds fly to the beaches of Long Island each spring and lay four eggs in a shell lined depression on the ground. By mid-September both the adults and the surviving young gather in flocks to begin their flight back to their wintering grounds, which include coastal beaches, sandflats, and mudflats from the Carolinas to the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

The piping plovers that nest in New York are part of the Atlantic Coast population, which is federally listed as threatened. Several factors are contributing to the decline of piping plovers along the Atlantic Coast. It is surprisingly easy for vehicle and foot traffic to unintentionally destroy the eggs and chicks that are virtually invisible on the beach. Both the eggs and chicks are so camouflaged that they are almost impossible to see, especially when the chicks squat motionless in response to predators and intruders. Human disturbance can also cause interrupted feeding, which can have fatal consequences for plover chicks that need to eat fairly constantly to grow large enough to fly about 25 days after hatching. Predators, such as foxes, raccoons, and cats, can also harass and kill the birds. However, the most significant threat facing piping plovers is human-caused habitat alteration.

Piping plovers thrive in dynamic coastal environments where storms reshape and flatten the landscape periodically. Plover productivity is usually very high in years following a storm. Storms can create breaches that provide great shorebird foraging habitat and open, wide flats that are ideal for nesting. On the contrary, the public often supports maintaining stable landscapes to preserve established coastal communities. Many stabilization efforts designed to mitigate shoreline erosion, such as breach fills and dune reconstruction, are believed to reduce optimal plover habitat created by natural processes.

Virginia Tech is currently conducting research to characterize the response of piping plovers to habitat created by Hurricane Sandy. Adults and chicks are uniquely marked with flags or colorbands to document and model habitat use by individual birds.

Individuals can help promote piping plover and coastal conservation by incorporating sustainable development practices in their beachfront communities. With continued help from individuals committed to shorebird conservation, there is hope that piping plover populations can recover.

How you can help:

- Don't leave or bury trash or food scraps on beaches. Garbage attracts predators which may prey upon piping plover eggs or chicks.
- Keep cats indoors during the breeding season
- Respect all areas fenced or posted for protection of wildlife.
- Do not approach piping plovers or their nests.
- If pets are permitted on beaches used by plovers, keep your pets leashed.
- Kelly Sloan



Photo by Audrey Deroose-Wilson



Photo by Audrey Deroose-Wilson



Photo by Audrey Deroose-Wilson

Smart Phone Apps for Nature Lovers



As a bird enthusiast, do you ever come across any wildlife you're unfamiliar with? Maybe you're out traveling and hiking or walking, anywhere in the world, and wish you could have a better sense of what you might come across. If this sounds familiar, [Project Noah](#) may be an App you might want to try.

Listed under "Education" and rated with 4.5 stars, this free App has users (like you) sharing with it wildlife sightings all around the world, as well as using its plant and/or animal field guide and identification tools features.

- Emma Paz

Naturalist



Olympics

Congratulations to our 2012-2013 winning Naturalist Olympian: Virginia Flatau.

In the early 1900s, population numbers of this species drastically declined, to the point restocking efforts intended to restore it required importing animals from a number of different states. Two epidemics, the screwworm and unregulated hunting, led to the near extinction of this species in South Carolina. Luckily, regulations were put into place to regulate and protect this species.

Do you know the answer? Send your best guess to naturalistolympics@gmail.com. A second event--and the ID of the mammal--will be announced in the next *Lesser Squawk*. Thanks to everyone who competed in our Naturalist Olympics last year, as described in the Summer issue of *The Lesser Squawk*. The answer to the final clue in last year's Naturalist Olympics, was [Trillium reliquum](#).



Photo Courtesy of Pamela Corwin



Photo Courtesy of Pamela Corwin

Citizen Science, Get Involved!

If you're interested in being a part of cutting-edge science projects internationally, check out Zooniverse. Zooniverse is a citizen-science website, which needs your help annotating media content.

The website allows you to help researchers from communities worldwide, on projects with a wide range of interests, from categorizing animals on the Serengeti, to identifying whale songs, and even to exploring the moon's surface.



By creating a short login, you can access data in an easy-to-use format and come back to helping with your favorite projects at any time. It's a fun way to get involved remotely and explore a high-tech method to promote citizen-science research!

- Caitlin Black, ceb51490@gmail.com



Energy & Recycling Tips: Recycling for Charity & Reusing old Sponges

Click on the items to see how you can recycle them for charity.

- [HOTEL TOILETRIES](#)
- [REUSABLE SHOPPING BAGS](#)
- [UNWANTED ELECTRONICS](#)
- [FORMAL WEAR AND BUSINESS WEAR](#)
- [BRAS](#)
- [PRINTER CARTRIDGE](#), etc.

REUSING OLD SPONGES:

Hand-me-down shoes that children have not quite grown into can be temporarily modified by adding a small piece of sponge inside the toe region (just cut the piece with sharp scissors to customize the fit). This can also work for shoes that are a little too large on grown-ups.

Demote your sponge from kitchen duty to task-specific jobs, whether you use it exclusively in the bathroom, on floors or simply for pet cleaning needs.

Reserve an old sponge for unexpected leaks or spills.

Cut them into shapes, dip into fabric paint and decorate tee-shirts or pillowcases.

Use them to dip in a lighter color when painting walls, for a texturized effect.

- Ann Shahid, rashahid@att.net



MOST VIEWED

See what all the facebook fuss is about. Here's what our Charleston Audubon & Natural History Society facebook friends have been checking out this summer:

1. Bee kind and support farmers who do not use pesticides and fungicides
2. Pluff Mud Perspectives: The Kites of Allendale, South Carolina
3. Why You Won't Be Attacked By A Shark - NOVA Next
4. DNR asks public to report sightings of banded wood storks
5. Newly discovered shark patrols SC waters
6. North Pole melts, forms lake at top of the world
7. Late July at Bear Island Wildlife Management Area
8. Taking the big leap or "You go first, I'll be right behind you"
9. The joy of trampolines
10. Pluff Mud Perspectives: Earthflight: -- A New Series on PBS' Nature



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