

# The LESSER SQUAWK



Newsletter of the  
Charleston Audubon

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

January – February, 2008

## President's Notes:

Happy New Year to all of our members! I hope many of you were able to attend our Holiday Oyster Roast and fundraiser at Bowen's Island Restaurant on December 2. Thanks to all who participated in organizing the event and making it a success, including Cornelia Carrier (event coordinator), Tom Snowden, Steve Bleezarde, Paul Nolan, Don and Lois Jones, Joe Cockrell, Kevin Hart, Cathy Miller, Bob Chinn, musician Dave LaBoone and many, many more. Also, I'd like to extend our appreciation to the following businesses that contributed wonderful items for the raffle: The Audubon Gallery, Beidler Forest Gift Shop, Charleston Cooks!, Middleton Place Plantation, Terrace Theater, and both the West Ashley Wild Birds Unlimited and Mt Pleasant Wild Birds Unlimited stores. Of course, we are also very grateful to Robert Barber for hosting our event at his famous restaurant.

We have some great programs and field trips to look forward to in the coming months, including lectures by Jimmy Chandler of the SC Environmental Law Project and Clemson University's Patrick McMillan, and outings to Mepkin Abbey, Santee NWR, Briar's Creek Golf Course on Johns Island and the Donnelly and Bear Island WMAs. At this time I'd like to thank Jeff Mollenhauer and Maria Whitehead for serving as the new co-compilers for the Charleston Christmas Bird Count

*continues – SEE President, pg. 2*

## Quick Calendar:

- 1/9 Lecture: Congaree Preservation . . . . pg 1
- 1/12 Mepkin Abbey Count/Fieldtrip . . . . pg 3
- 1/26 Santee NWR Fieldtrip . . . . . pg 3
- 2/9 Briar's Creek Golf Club Fieldtrip . . . pg 3
- 2/13 Lecture: Patrick McMillan . . . . . pg 1
- 2/24 ACE Basin Fieldtrip . . . . . pg 3

## Mark Your Calendars Now for Our January and February Lectures

**Wednesday, January 9, 6:30 pm**

### SCLEP's Jimmy Chandler, Jr.: Defending the Congaree

James S. (Jimmy) Chandler, Jr., founded the SC Environmental Law Project, a non-profit public interest law firm, in 1987. He has represented national, state, and local organizations in environmental cases before state and federal courts and agencies. His cases have involved a variety of issues, including wetlands, coastal management, water quality, air quality, solid and hazardous waste landfills and incinerators, and mining. His environmental work has set many valuable legal precedents and been recognized by several state and national awards. For 20 years, SCELPEP was the only non-profit environmental law firm in this state.

Jimmy is currently representing the Audubon Society (among others) in a case concerning proposed road work within the Congaree National Park. We seek to stop to plans to fill wetlands in the Congaree floodplain and to obtain a full Environmental Impact Statement by the Dept of Transportation.

To find out more about this case and others, please visit the SC Environmental Law Project Website at [www.SCELP.org](http://www.SCELP.org).

**Wednesday, February 13, 6:30 p.m.**

### ETV's Patrick McMillan: Nature on the Move

Times they are a changin' and animals and plants are racing to keep up. Join Clemson University naturalist and host of the ETV program Expeditions Patrick McMillan for a look at plants and animals on the move. Alteration of habitats such as the wetlands of south Florida, moderation in winter temperatures and extreme droughts are forcing native species to seek refuge in new regions. As a consequence, South Carolina is becoming a home away from home for some new and interesting species. We'll take a look at some of the most dramatic examples, from sitings of snail kites, to increases in wood stork populations, bears visiting our Upstate cities and otherwise tropical plants showing up in the Grand Strand.

This is a joint presentation with The Nature Conservancy, and we're proud to be able to host this Low Country event.

## Lectures at the Library:

*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 lectures – which are free and open to the public – start at 7 p.m. Drinks, plates and napkins provided – please consider bringing a dessert to share!*

*Note that this is the Jan./Feb. issue of The Lesser Squawk: the next issue will cover March/April 2008. Please mark upcoming events on your calendar now!*

*Up-to-date calendar items will also be posted online – please visit our website for event details and other community information: [www.charlestonaudubon.org](http://www.charlestonaudubon.org)*

## A Year of Surveys – Sullivans Island's Critical Bird Habitat

In 2006 CNHS agreed to join the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Audubon Society, SC Audubon, SC DNR and numerous other partners in the SC Shorebird Conservation Project, a cooperative effort to conduct research and foster education about Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) in our state. This species is Federally-listed as Endangered, and small numbers of these pale, diminutive shorebirds winter on beaches along the southern Atlantic seaboard – including the entire SC coast. The Piping Plover (PIPL) is a priority species on the recently released 2007 Watchlist of birds needing urgent conservation attention in order to assure their continued survival (see <http://web1.audubon.org/science/species/watchlist/index.php>). We are nearing the end of our first year of PIPL surveys at the SC-10 Critical Habitat Area on the north end of Seabrook Island, and thus it seems appropriate to summarize what our survey teams have observed so far.

We began in December 2006 by meeting with Sid Maddock, NC Audubon's Field Technician for the Outer Banks of NC, for a workshop on how to conduct our surveys and report the results. This included a field outing to Bird Key Stono to learn the right way to approach PIPL without disturbing them, so as to get the best possible look (with a spotting scope) at their legs – the bands that are used are very small and some are even split, with two or three color combinations

that must be distinguished! Although the focus of the study is on PIPL, we are required to watch for and note any Wilson's Plovers, Red Knots, American Oystercatchers or Marbled Godwits that we observe. On the survey forms we also record the time of survey, tidal stage (within two hours of high tide is preferred), weather, numbers of people or dogs (on or off-leash), and other factors.

Since then we have conducted 14 surveys at SC-10 (there are 15 designated Critical Habitat Areas for wintering PIPL in SC). These surveys have involved five CNHS members (Andy Harrison, Don Jones, George and Mary Anne Cromartie, and Tom Snowden) who have combined to volunteer over 100 person-hours of effort. Seabrook resident Lori Hilker has assisted us in many ways, including providing ready access to the beach. We've observed a total of 32 PIPL, seen on 7 of the 14 surveys. Only two of these birds have been banded (more later). However, we've also reported banded Red Knots and American Oystercatchers and have seen Wilson's Plovers on 9 of 14 surveys.

On most of these surveys we have observed many other good birds, too, including species such as Reddish Egret, Bald Eagle and Black Tern. We have often been treated to the sight of groups of Bottlenose Dolphins "herding" fish in the Kiawah River. This past fall a storm breached the lagoon near the mouth of the river and created a new channel,

effectively cutting off access to most of SC-10 at high tide to beach walkers and their dogs. According to Sid Maddock, the resulting partial refuge seems to have improved the habitat for PIPL (more birds are using the area than in past years).

Our most recently observed banded PIPL (11/11/07 by Andy Harrison) has an interesting history. After the initial report, Sid Maddock recognized the band combination as possibly belonging to the Great Lakes breeding population that he had observed earlier at Deveaux Bank. He returned to Seabrook/Kiawah to look for the bird and was able to relocate it and obtain photographs of its bands. The band number confirmed this as the second Great Lakes bird that Sid has observed first at Deveaux Bank and then later encountered after it has moved north to a new location. Olivia LeDee, with the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology at the University of Minnesota, later reported that our PIPL was one of four chicks banded with this combination in the Platte River area of Michigan in 2007.

We plan to continue our surveys at SC-10 over the winter and into the spring of 2008. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Andy Harrison at 795-6934 or [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com). By contributing our data to the PIPL research community we can help ensure that these beautiful shorebirds continue to return to SC beaches every year.

### *President* – continued from pg. 1

held on December 30, and also to Burton Moore for his years of service in this role. If you were unable to participate in one of the local Christmas Bird Counts this year, the trip to Mepkin Abbey will be a good opportunity to experience a winter bird count! We will be compiling a list of the number of species and individuals observed over the course of the day – this information will be provided to the monks in order to help them learn more about the birds that make use of the property over the course of the year. For those who prefer to remain a little closer to home, the annual Great Backyard Bird Count will take place February 15–18 (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>). Finally, work continues at our McAlhany Nature Preserve on the longleaf pine/old field restoration project (including a prescribed burn this winter) and other ongoing management activities.

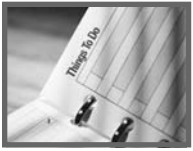
National Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy

recently released their Watchlist 2007 (see <http://web1.audubon.org/science/species/watchlist/index.php>) of the 178 bird species needing immediate conservation assistance in order to ensure their continued survival. 53 of these species can be seen in South Carolina, including the endangered Piping Plover (red-listed as one of the highest priority species in the Watchlist). Our chapter will continue our surveys for wintering and migratory Piping Plovers at the SC-10 Critical Habitat Area on Seabrook Island this year – see inside for a summary of our results so far!

I look forward to seeing you at one or more of our events in the coming year. If you have suggestions or comments, or are interested in volunteering, don't hesitate to contact me or another Board member. Thanks,

– Andy Harrison    phone: 843 795-6934  
Email: [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com)





## MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

### Upcoming Programs, Outings & Lowcountry Events

#### Fieldtrips & Outings:

##### » Mepkin Abbey

» Saturday, January 12, 2008, 7:00 a.m.

Join us for a count of wintering bird species at Mepkin Abbey on January 12!

Last spring our chapter was invited to help the monks learn more about the bird species that can be observed on their property (as part of a long-term project to develop and showcase the conservation and education values of the site). Mr. John Martin, a volunteer at Mepkin Abbey, had inquired about the possibility of conducting seasonal bird surveys there, and we began with a spring survey on May 12 (on which we saw 48 species).

Mepkin Abbey is an active Trappist monastery overlooking the West Branch of the Cooper River. The former plantation home of Henry Laurens, the property was also owned by publisher Henry R. Luce and his wife, Claire Booth Luce (who donated much of the land to the Trappist Order in 1949). In addition to landscaped grounds and gardens, its 3000 acres also include forested areas, old fields and frontage on the river and freshwater marshes. We can expect to see typical Lowcountry wintering species such as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Blue-headed Vireo, and perhaps even a Winter Wren or Orange-crowned Warbler.

Meet Andy Harrison at 7:00 a.m. Saturday, January 12 in the small parking lot between 17A and the frontage road for the Summerville Wal-Mart shopping center (off I-26 at exit 199A). We'll carpool from there to Mepkin Abbey, where we will meet Mr. Martin at the gift shop. Bring binoculars/scopes, field guides, water, food/snacks, sunscreen/insect repellent and weather-appropriate clothing.

Register with Andy at 795-6934 or by e-mail at [parula23@aol.com](mailto:parula23@aol.com) by Friday, January 11.

##### » Santee NWR

» Saturday, Jan. 26, 7:00 a.m.

On Saturday January 26th join Don Jones and Andy Harrison for a day of birding at the Bluff and Cuddo units of the Santee National Wildlife Refuge. This is one of our regular winter birding trips and we are usually rewarded with some great sightings. Raptors, wading birds, ducks, geese, sparrows and other winter birds are present and in the past we've seen large numbers of Sandhill Cranes. We will bird until mid afternoon so bring a lunch as well as your birding gear.

Our meeting place will be in the Wal-Mart parking lot in Summerville just off of 17-A next to First Citizens Bank at 7:00 AM To register please contact Don 572-8232 or [Birdfrogdjj@aol.com](mailto:Birdfrogdjj@aol.com) before the 26th.

##### » Briar's Creek Golf Club

» Saturday, Feb. 9, 7:30 a.m.

This is not a misprint; we will be birding at a golf course. Briar's Creek is a residential community and golf club located on 600 acres on the banks of Bryans creek not far from Kiawah Island. The development plan left a lot of the area in its natural state and it is maintained for wildlife. Fresh water swamps and a large lake attract numbers of wading birds and water fowl and the nearby salt marsh provide habitat for many other species.

We will meet in the shopping center parking lot at the intersection of Folly Rd. and Maybank Hwy. at 7:30am and car pool from there. We will bird until mid afternoon so bring a snack or lunch, binoculars, scopes and dress for the weather. Golf carts will be provided. To register contact Don Jones by February 7th so that we can give our host an accurate head count. 572-8232 or [Birdfrogdjj@aol.com](mailto:Birdfrogdjj@aol.com)

##### » ACE Basin: Bear Isl./Donnelley

» Sunday, Feb 24, 7:00 a.m.

On Sunday, February 24th our group will travel to the ACE Basin for another of our traditional winter field trips. Last year we had great weather and observed 65 species including water fowl, raptors, wading birds, gulls and terns and numerous small birds such as sparrows, pipits, bluebirds, pine warblers, nuthatches and woodpeckers. For the past several years a few Whooping Cranes have been observed in the areas we will be birding and who knows we may get lucky.

The Bear Island and Donnelly WMA together contain over 20,000 acres of diverse habitats including pine and hardwood forest, fresh water impoundments, salt marsh and agricultural land. This diversity accounts for the large number of bird and other wildlife species that may be seen.

We'll meet at 7:00 AM in the Food Lion parking lot near the intersection of 17 and 165 and car pool from there. This will be an all day trip; so in addition to binoculars, scopes and field guides, bring food and water. If you plan to go please contact Don Jones before the 24th. 572-8232 or [Birdfrogdjj@aol.com](mailto:Birdfrogdjj@aol.com)

#### Annual Backyard Bird Count

Count in America's Great Backyard:  
February 15-18, 2008

- No Fee or registration required
- All ages and skill levels welcome
- Count in your backyard, schoolyard, park, wildlife refuge, etc.
- Be a part of the network

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 Great Backyard Bird Count, you help document where birds are, and track changes in their numbers compared to previous years, helping scientists paint a picture of the state of birds this winter.

For more information, and to view past results, go to:

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



# The LESSER SQUAWK

The Charleston Natural History Society  
 P.O. Box 504  
 Charleston, SC 29402

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
 US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 CHARLESTON, SC  
 PERMIT NO. 349



The Charleston Audubon – active as the Charleston Natural History Society since 1905; a chapter of the National Audubon Society since 1970; serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties – is a nonprofit environmental organization that actively promotes awareness, appreciation and conservation of the natural environment through regular educational programs, field trips, conservation projects, sponsored research and social activities.

Learn more online at [www.CharlestonAudubon.org](http://www.CharlestonAudubon.org).



## Renew or Give a Gift Membership Today

*Audubon*, our quarterly flagship publication, is just one of the benefits of membership. Each issue of this award-winning publication features beautiful photography and provocative journalism.



### 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:**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY STATE ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**THIS MEMBERSHIP IS FOR:**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY STATE ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL THIS COUPON AND YOUR CHECK TO:**

**AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP CENTER**  
**P.O. BOX 51003**  
**BOULDER, CO 80323-1003**

# \_\_\_\_\_  
 [ 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

Membership dues support efforts to monitor bird populations and to conserve wetlands, and help with many other challenging conservation programs Audubon undertakes to ensure a healthier environment.

» visit [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) to learn more about membership.