

THE LESSER SQUAWK

www.charlestonaudubon.org

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon &
Natural History Society

DON'T MISS EVENTS!

* **Note Change of Venue:** All LECTURES will be held at 6 PM in the Biology Auditorium (room 101) in Duckett Hall on the campus of The Citadel ([map](#)). Free parking is available along the west and south sides of Summerall Field directly across the street from Duckett and Bond Halls. There is also free parking after 5 PM in faculty lots directly behind Bond Hall.

EVENT (Jan 5th): Christmas Bird Count



Regardless of your birding skill level, we need you! On Saturday, January 5th Charleston Audubon will do its annual count as part of the 113th Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Our count will be one of over 2,000 counts conducted from Canada to South America. If you participate, you will be joining almost 61,000 observers in one of the largest citizen science projects in the world.

We routinely have high numbers of both species and individual birds in our count circle, so please come join us for this fun event. Even better, this year it's free to participate in the count! No more \$5 fee to be collected.

Contact our CBC compiler, Jen Tyrrell at jennybluejay@gmail.com for details if you haven't already coordinated with your territory leader; Jen will steer us toward the territories that most need participants for full coverage. We'll meet at 7 AM at the old KFC, now Mama Brown's BBQ ([map](#)) in Mt. Pleasant at the intersection of Rt. 17 and Rt. 41, unless your territory leader has made other arrangements with Jen. See you there :-)

Calendar of Events

Saturday Jan 5th, 7am

EVENT: Christmas Bird Count

For more details see article to the left.

Wednesday Jan 9th, 6-8pm

LECTURE: Amphibians in a changing world: Environmental stress and the future of frog populations

For more details see article on page 3.

Saturday Jan 19th, 7am-3pm

FIELD TRIP: Santee NWR

See article on page 3 for more information.



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

December 14, 2012 -- I sat down to write a review of our group's year and the great things that we (really, you, as a group) have done but can't stop my mind from drifting northward. I want to write of field trips and meals and gatherings, but am haunted instead by the tiny faces I see staring from the news with goofy haircuts and lost teeth, bright smiles and the promise of a future that we know will never come for them. Because shots rang out today, in a small classroom far to the north of us.

Shots rang out today, at a time of year when little voices are typically raised in song and joy; today, they were instead raised in fear, and then went quiet. We're only now learning the full extent of the madness that took place in Connecticut.

We can all imagine how time might have turned differently today, and should all dream and hope for the day when a six-year old's life involves only playing and singing and learning, while sending thoughts and prayers and love northward to those who need them. For me, I plan to be with my family as soon as possible, and to hold them close; I wish the same for you as the year draws to a close.

I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge - myth is more potent than history - dreams are more powerful than facts - hope always triumphs over experience - laughter is the cure for grief - love is stronger than death. - Robert Fulghum

Paul Nolan
paulnolancnhs@gmail.com

Calendar of Events

Sunday Feb 10th, 7am-3pm

FIELD TRIP: Bear Island/Donelley WMA

For more details see article on page 4.

Wednesday Feb 13th, 6-8pm

LECTURE: John Nelson, Joint meeting with the Charleston Chapter of the SC Native Plant Society

See article on page 4 for more details.

Saturday Feb 23rd, 7am-3pm

FIELD TRIP: South Tibwin

See article on page 5 for more details.

Saturday March 9th,
7:30am-3:30pm

FIELD TRIP: Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center

See article on page 5 for more details.

Wednesday March 13th,
6-8pm

LECTURE: Aaron Given, "A Bird in the Hand: Bird Banding on Kiawah Island"

Aaron Given is a Certified Wildlife Biologist (CWB) endorsed by The Wildlife Society, and has been the Assistant Wildlife Biologist for the Town of Kiawah Island since 2008. We will meet at 6 PM for socializing and snacks (feel free to bring a snack to share ;-)) and then Mr. Given will begin his talk at 6:30.



Don't Miss Events!

LECTURE (Jan 9th): Amphibians in a changing world: Environmental stress and the future of frog populations

As humans continue to modify the planet, natural habitats are increasingly degraded, with potentially dire consequences for native species. Here in the South Carolina Lowcountry, freshwater habitats face a number of threats, from introduced species to chemical pollutants to rising sea levels. Amphibians are important members of terrestrial ecosystems, and many depend on freshwater habitats to complete their life cycle. This talk will discuss research on the effects of two forms of environmental stress – pesticides and increased salinity – on the ecological and evolutionary potential of local frog populations.



Allison Welch is an Assistant Professor of Biology at the College of Charleston. Allison completed her Ph.D. in Biology at the University of Missouri, studying behavioral and evolutionary ecology of frogs. She held postdoctoral appointments at the University of North Carolina and the University of Missouri before coming to the College of Charleston in 2005. Allison resides on James Island with her husband and their two children.

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 (Jan 19th): Santee NWR

This year we will be birding at Santee National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, January 19. We'll start with a walk along the Wright's Bluff Nature Trail in the Bluff Unit. There is an overlook on Cantey Bay from which we may see a variety of wintering waterfowl.

During our walk through the woods we could see species such as Blue-headed Vireo, Black and White Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Brown Creeper and Red-breasted Nuthatch, as well as more common winter species. Atop a viewing platform beside a large open field we might observe Sandhill Cranes, migratory Canada Geese and Snow Geese, as well as raptors such as Bald Eagles, American Kestrels and Northern Harriers. Restrooms are available at the visitor center, and we usually take a break there for lunch before heading to our next birding destination – either the Pine Island or Cuddo Unit. Both areas are excellent places to observe a variety of winter sparrows, as well as more raptors, waterfowl and woodland birds.

Bring food and water, your birding gear (including a scope if you have one) and dress for the weather – it can be very cold on the viewing platform early in the morning! We'll meet at 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 January 19 at parula23@aol.com or 843 795-6934.

Calendar of Events

Saturday March 23rd,
7am-3pm

FIELD TRIP: Seabrook Plantation

Our first visit to Seabrook Plantation was in November 2010, and those who attended were impressed with the beauty of the restored plantation house grounds. The main house was built in the Federal style by William Seabrook in 1810 and became a model for other builders in the area. The 350-acre property contains a variety of habitats, including salt marsh, mixed hardwoods, pine forest, old agricultural land and freshwater features. We can expect to see herons and egrets, ducks, raptors, and field and woodland birds. There is also an active Bald Eagle nest tree on the property.

We will meet at 7 AM in the [Food Lion parking lot](#) in Ravenel, SC. Restrooms will be available but no picnic area.

Bring your birding gear, food and water, and bug spray. Registration for this outing must be made several days in advance so that we can let our host know how many people are coming. Call or email Andy Harrison prior to March 20 at parula23@aol.com or 843-795-6934.

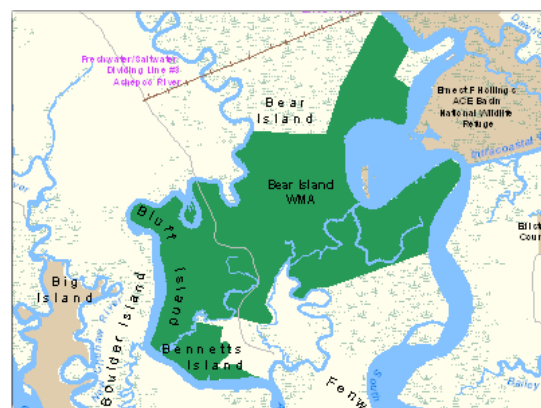
More Information

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 (Feb 10th): Bear Island/Donnelley WMA

On Sunday, February 10 Don Jones will lead our group on a birding tour through the [Bear Island](#) and [Donnelley](#) WMAs, located in the ACE Basin. Managed by the SC Department of Natural Resources, these two properties have a combined area of some 20,000 acres and include a wide range of habitats, including mixed pine-hardwoods forest, tidal creeks, freshwater impoundments, salt marsh and agricultural fields.

During the winter season they host a large number of waterfowl and wading birds, and on past visits we've been treated to great views of Tundra Swans, White Pelicans, King Rails, White and Glossy Ibis, shorebirds (including American Avocets) and various ducks (such as Black Ducks, Northern Shovelers and Pintails). In addition, we usually do well with raptors such as Bald Eagles and Ospreys and see many wintering songbird species.



This will be an all day trip so bring water, snacks and a lunch in addition to your birding gear, including a scope if you have one. Restrooms and picnic areas are limited. Most of the birding will be done from the roadside so there will be a minimal amount of walking. We will meet at 7 AM in the Food Lion parking lot at the intersection of US Hwy 17 South and SC 165 in Ravenel, SC ([map](#)) and carpool from there. Please register with Don Jones prior to February 10 at Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com or 843-572-8232.

LECTURE (Feb 13th): John Nelson, Joint meeting with the Charleston Chapter of the SC Native Plant Society

Save the date for our joint meeting with the Charleston Chapter of the SC Native Plant Society. John Nelson, Curator of the A. C. Moore Herbarium at USC and the "Mystery Doctor with the Mystery Plant" on "Making it Grow!" TV Series will be speaking. 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. Check out our [facebook](#) page or [calendar](#) for more information, as the details are solidified.

Find an injured Bird of Prey or Shorebird?

Call the [Center for Birds of Prey](#):

(843) 971-7474.



Injured Brown Pelican. Photo: International Bird Rescue Research Center

They have volunteers throughout the county to meet and help transport injured birds. If they don't take the birds (ie: songbirds), they have a list of bird rehabilitators in the area that may be able to help.

Other Interesting Events in the Lowcountry:

- [Nightwalks at Beidler Forest](#)
- [Birds of Prey Raptor Center](#)
- [Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center](#)

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FIELD TRIP (Feb 23rd): South Tibwin Plantation

South Tibwin Plantation has a variety of great birding habitats, including freshwater ponds, salt marshes, tidal creeks, waterfowl impoundments, and longleaf pine uplands. Besides waterfowl and wading birds (possibly including American Bittern), we may also see some shorebirds. Songbirds that we might see include some wintering species such as Blue-headed Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler and Brown Creeper.



We will meet at 7 AM in the parking lot of the “new” Walmart Supercenter at Oaklawn Plantation on Highway 17 North ([map](#)) and carpool from there. Please bring water, snacks, your birding gear and a spotting scope if you have one. There are no restrooms at Tibwin, and we will do a fair amount of walking (2-3 miles). After the field trip ends about noon, we will go to lunch at TW Graham’s, a restaurant in nearby McClellanville. Please register with Doreen Cubie (doreencubie@tds.net or 843-991-1054) by February 22.



Photo from SCDNR

FIELD TRIP (March 9th): Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center

Willed to the SC Department of Natural Resources in 1976 by the late Tom Yawkey, the [Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center](#) is widely considered one of the most outstanding conservation bequests ever made in North America. The property consists of 31 square miles of marsh, managed wetlands, forest openings, ocean beach, longleaf pine forest and maritime forest, and it is principally dedicated as a wildlife preserve, research area and waterfowl refuge.

Over 200 bird species are supported on the Preserve, including seasonally high numbers of raptorial species such as various hawks, Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, and Bald and Golden Eagles. The undisturbed ocean beaches provide large areas for shorebirds (including Piping Plovers) and seabirds to rest and forage. Visits to the Tom Yawkey Center are arranged by guided tour only and the number of participants is necessarily limited to 14. Participants will meet at 7:30 AM in the Lowe’s parking lot directly behind the IHOP on Hwy 17 North in Mt Pleasant ([map](#)).

From there we’ll carpool for the roughly one hour drive to the South Island ferry landing, where we will meet our guide, TYWC Project Leader Jamie Dozier. After a short boat trip we will tour the Preserve in a small bus. Bring water, snacks, lunch and your birding gear. If you would like to join this trip, please register with Andy Harrison prior to March 9 at parula23@aol.com or 843-795-6934. Registration will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. The first 13 people to reply will be added to the confirmed list, and all others will be placed on a waiting list (from which any necessary replacements will also be selected on the same basis).

A Note on Field Trips: The "ending times" listed in the calendar descriptions for field trips are only approximations. Trip leaders will take weather and birding conditions into account, as well as the attitude of the group when deciding when to wrap-up. If you have questions, please ask the trip leader when you register to participate.

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paulnolancnhs@gmail.com

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Species Highlight: American Mink

One of the mammals we have in the Lowcountry is a [mink](#), *Neovision vision*, formerly *Mustela vision*. Sightings are on the increase among our shell middens and barrier islands. Keep your eyes open while exploring or fishing, and you may be treated to the sight of one of these elusive mustelids. Native to North America, the species has also been introduced to Europe and South America, expanding the range (which makes it classified as a species of least concern). Hunted widely for their pelts since before colonial times, there were once two species of mink along the eastern coastline. The other, the [sea mink](#), was widespread in the Northeast, and was one of the only carnivores hunted to extinction in modern historical times. It was larger than the American Minks we have, with a larger pelt, with an estimated extinction date in the 1860's.

South Carolina's mink population, once abundant, declined dramatically about half a century ago, with various forms of pollution thought to be at least one cause, since mink are highly susceptible to environmental contaminants. Since 1999, a DNR restocking effort has aimed at restoring the mink population along the coast north of Charleston, where mink have essentially been absent for decades.

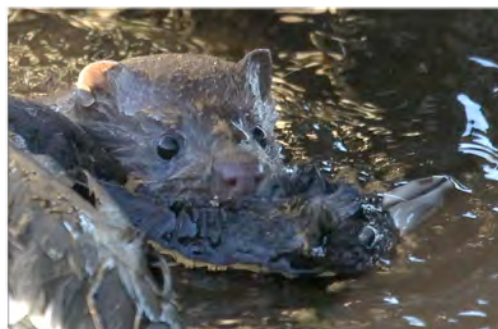
They are solitary animals that tend to be most active at dusk and dawn, although they have been seen at midday as well. Often found near water, they eat fish and small animals. Our own [Cathy Miller](#) captured these shots of a mink at Huntington Beach state park, eating an American Coot. Major predators of mink include bobcats, foxes, great horned owls, and alligators. While hunters still take a few mink, the fur trade relies almost completely on commercially farmed mink.

Mink also eat a variety of mammals including rice rats, muskrats, gray squirrels, cottontail rabbits, and deer mice. Crawfish are an important component of the diet in most freshwater habitats and are replaced by crabs in the diet of minks living in saltwater marshes. Other foods include insects, frogs, snakes, snails, and waterfowl.

A solitary mink was fishing Velvet Creek a few weeks ago, hopping up and down on the bank, diving into the water, catching fish, and hopping back up on the bank. I headed over there, hoping to get a photo of tracks, but there was so much wrack on the bank it was impossible. The SCDNR site has a diagram of tracks, and for more details, you can [click here](#) to see mink tracks at the very helpful website beartracker.com.



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• Judy Drew Fairchild, *Adapted from Dewees Island Blog*

Smart Phone Apps for Nature Lovers

NatureFine

If you are looking for an excuse to get outside and enjoy the perks of our mild southern winters, look no farther than your phone or tablet. With the NatureFind application you can discover natural sites close to your chosen location. The app includes detailed descriptions of each place, photographs, and interactive maps. These sites range from botanical gardens to wildlife trails to natural history museums and the app highlights upcoming events sponsored by each place. NatureFind is available for free from the iTunes store for iPhones, iPads, and iPod Touches.



Get more details at www.naturefind.com/iphone.asp.

- Caitlin Black

Naturalist



Olympics

This *native* bird is the third species of this years *Naturalist Olympics*. The red eye and water in the background give it away. Send your answer to naturalistolympics@gmail.com. A fourth event--and the ID of the bird--will be announced in the next *Lesser Squawk*.

Thanks to everyone who competed in our Naturalist Olympics, as described in the November/December issue of *The Lesser Squawk*. No entrants correctly guessed the ID of the native bird, *red-shouldered hawk* (*Buteo lineatus*), so the contest is still wide open.

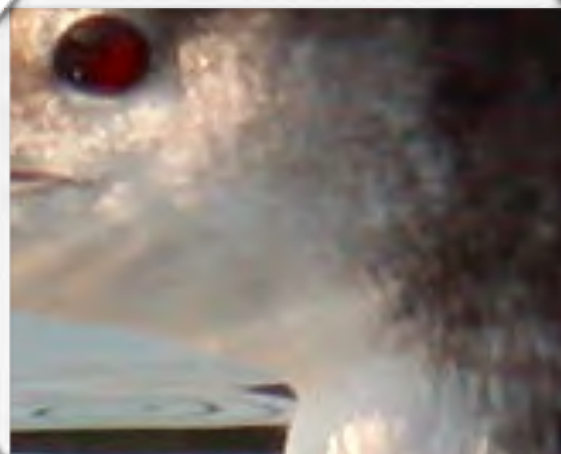



Photo Courtesy of Pamela Corwin



Photo Courtesy of Pamela Corwin



Energy & Recycling Tips: CIGARETTE BUTTS CAN NOW BE RECYCLED

One of my top pet peeves is discarded cigarette butts. Much worse than seeing the individual ones discarded as if they are not trash is seeing a whole ashtray full dumped out at a stop light. Even worse is seeing them on a beach where animals at sea or birds may mistake them for food. If you smoke, or work in or frequent a place that has cigarette butt receptacles, please read on to see how cigarette butts can be recycled. Also, if you do smoke, please save your filter after finishing the cigarette.



From Earth 911 (article)

Cigarette butts are the most littered item in America and make up 38% of all trash on U.S. roadways, according to [Keep America Beautiful](#). Annually, worldwide cigarette butt litter amounts to 1.69 billion pounds.

[TerraCycle Inc.](#), a company devoted to creating recycling systems for hard-to-recycle waste, has teamed up with [Sante Fe Natural Tobacco Co.](#) to create an alternative to leaving cigarette butts on roadways or putting them into landfills. The tobacco company will sponsor TerraCycle's [Cigarette Waste Brigade](#), which will allow individuals and groups to collect cigarette waste, print a prepaid shipping label and then mail the cigarettes to TerraCycle, where they will be turned into new products such as shipping pallets, railroad ties, plastic lumber and ash trays.

TerraCycle's mission is to solve waste issues and eliminate the idea of waste, and cigarettes have been on their list of items to tackle for a long time. They believe that to solve waste problems, less desirable forms of waste such as cigarettes need to be dealt with, too.

"We started out doing a lot of consumer packaging and we really wanted to take on some more serious issues. There is no more serious of an environmental issue when it comes to litter and waste than cigarette butts," Albe Zakes, Global VP of Media Relations for TerraCycle, told Earth911.

The program is aimed to target cigarette waste in two ways. First, it will take aim at cigarette waste that has already been littered by working with anti-litter groups and beach clean-up efforts, since those people are already collecting trash and disposing of it in landfills. Second, the program will work with larger facilities like shopping malls, office parks, bars and other places where cigarettes are consumed in large numbers and responsibly discarded, Zakes explained.

"Because of how many cigarettes are consumed and because of the rate of consumption, we do expect this to be a very, very impactful and patroned program," Zakes said. "The goal is to collect hundreds of millions of butts, if not more. We want to make a dent. Unless you're collecting hundreds of millions of butts, you're not making a dent."

Those age 21 or older who are interested in getting involved can visit TerraCycle's website to sign up for the brigade.

• 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 recently:

1. [Oyster Roast 2012](#)
2. [ETV's "Your Day" on birds](#)
3. [Audubon Magazine Loon Photo Honoree](#)
4. [We stand beside you - Sandy Hook Elementary](#)
5. [National Audubon Society Bird Challenge](#)
6. [Huntington Beach State Park Field Trip](#)
7. [Wild Birds Unlimited Charleston, SC - Red Breasted Nuthatch](#)
8. [Flock of Razorbill off of Miami Beach](#)
9. [Wild for Wildlife and Nature - Rare Silver Fox](#)
10. [Happy Hanukkah, from Audubon Magazine](#)



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