

THE LESSER SQUAWK

www.charlestonaudubon.org

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon &
Natural History Society



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FIELD TRIP (March 10th): Seabrook Plantation

Seabrook Plantation is located about a mile east of S.C. Hwy. 174, several miles north of Edisto Island. Our first visit to this property was in November 2010 and those who attended were impressed with the beauty of the restored plantation house grounds. Located on the banks of Steamboat Creek, the property contains a variety of habitats, including salt marsh, mixed hardwoods, pines, old agricultural land and fresh water features. We can expect to see a mix of species such as herons and egrets, ducks, raptors and woodland birds.



We will meet at 7 am in the parking lot of the Food Lion at the intersection of S.C. Hwy. 165 and U.S. 17 ([map](#)) in Ravenel. Restrooms will be available, but there will be 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. Please call or email Don Jones prior to March 8th; Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com or 843-572-8232.

Calendar of Events

March 10th, 7 am - 2 pm

FIELD TRIP: Seabrook Plantation

See article (left) for more details.

March 14th, 6 - 8 pm

LECTURE: South Carolina's Changing Energy Landscape

Mr. Hamilton Davis, Energy and Climate Director with the SC Coastal Conservation League, will be the speaker at our March 14, 2012 meeting. He will discuss the current opportunities and challenges that exist in SC related to the generation and use of energy. See article on page 3 for more details.

March 31st, 7 am - 3 pm

FIELD TRIP: Grove Plantation

See article on page 4 for more details.

Note: 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.

President's Notes

Love is in the air :-). It's Valentine's Day, 2012, as I write this, and I can hear house finches singing to attract mates from a number of perches across The Citadel campus. [Bald eagle nests](#) throughout the Lowcountry are either far advanced or finishing up, and many of the ducks that spend the winter with us have left for the long flight north and west to the [prairie pothole region](#) where they'll raise their chicks. The yellow-rumped warblers, which were the most abundant bird by far in [our Christmas Bird Count](#) (search "SCCA"), will leave soon before being replaced by those over-achievers of the plumage coloration world, the painted buntings coming 'from off' to [build nests along ecotones](#) in the Lowcountry. Even 'spring' peepers can be found looking for love at [this time of year](#). Although these events are scattered throughout the area, they're certainly not hidden and we're likely to witness them on one or more of our outings in the next few months.

This spring's field trips will be notable in that they will be the last set run entirely by our excellent Outings Leader, Don Jones. After years of shouldering the load of organizing and leading all of our trips by himself, Don will take a well-deserved step back from that role beginning in the Fall. We'll transition to having a variety of trip leaders and potentially exploring some different sites. So, we'll definitely be searching for volunteers to help lead some trips and for input on where you want to go on field trips. Start thinking about it, and get in touch with ideas. In the



meantime, be sure to watch our [calendar](#) and join us in the field; Don has arranged a great series of trips through May.

Another change coming soon—possibly by the time we publish this issue of *The Lesser Squawk*—is that we've arranged with Paypal.com to accept donations through our website. This will allow us a lot of flexibility in accepting payments during the Bird Seed sale in the Fall, and in pre-paying admissions for our holiday party & oyster roast fundraiser in December. We hope to test the functionality of this feature with the Spring Bird Count & Birdathon coming up in early May. Eventually we hope to make available a variety of CNHS merchandise such as note cards, t-shirts, [Pluff Mud Perspectives](#) calendars etc. You don't need a Paypal account to use this feature, and it will accept all major credit and debit cards, so watch the CNHS web site and [facebook page](#) for ways to help support your group.

In the meantime, watch your feeders for signs of amorous [neotropical migrants](#) returning from their wintering grounds, open your windows to [listen to the songs of Spring](#) beginning to fill the air, and be sure to join us for a field trip or lecture soon.

Paul Nolan
paulnolancnhs@gmail.com

Calendar of Events

April 11th, 6 - 8 pm

LECTURE: South Carolina's Alligators: A Unique Resource

Note: on April 11 we are meeting in our regular location, the auditorium in the main branch of the Charleston County Library at 68 Calhoun Street.

[Dr. Thomas Rainwater](#), a Wildlife Ecotoxicologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will swamp us with information on American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) biology and explain why these top predators are so important in SC coastal wetlands. See article on page 5 for more details.

April 14th, 7 am - 2 pm

FIELD TRIP: Briar's Creek

See article on page 5 for more details.

May 6th, 6 - 8 pm

EVENT: Bird-a-thon & Spring Bird Count

See flyer on page 6 for more details.

May 9th, 6 - 8 pm

LECTURE: Birding in Cuba

Note: on May 9 we are meeting in our regular location, the auditorium in the main branch of the Charleston County Library at 68 Calhoun Street.

On Wednesday, May 9 Ms. Cornelia Carrier, longtime board member and past President of the Charleston Natural History Society, will present a program on her birding trip to Cuba in 2011. See article on page 5 for more details.

DON'T MISS EVENTS!

LECTURE (March 14th): South Carolina's Changing Energy Landscape

Mr. Hamilton Davis, Energy and Climate Director with the SC Coastal Conservation League, will be the speaker at our March 14, 2012 meeting. He will discuss the current opportunities and challenges that exist in SC related to the generation and use of energy.

A window of opportunity has opened in SC to rethink not only how we use energy, but also where that energy will come from. If we don't move quickly, there will be critical opportunities lost: near term job creation and economic development, a smooth transition into a new energy reality, the preservation of a healthy environment for residents, and the conservation of our natural resources. The Coastal Conservation League (CCL) advocates for our elected officials, business leaders, and all South Carolinians to support energy policies that will lead to a more secure and prosperous clean energy future for the Palmetto State. A truly comprehensive approach by the state should include ambitious energy efficiency and conservation programs while also promoting the state's bio-energy, offshore wind, geothermal, and solar potential.



A native of SC, Mr. Davis earned a B.S. from Clemson University and a J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law. He has worked with the SC CCL since 2006 and now serves as their Energy and Climate Director. The CCL Energy and Climate Program promotes the implementation of progressive local, state, and federal energy policies related to renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate change.

We'll gather at 6 pm for snacks (feel free to bring something to share :-)) then Mr. Davis will speak beginning at 6:30 pm, with time for questions afterwards. This lecture will be held at our usual venue, the Charleston County Public Library at 68 Calhoun St. in Charleston.

Don't Forget

Visit www.CharlestonAudubon.org and sign up for email updates on upcoming lectures and field trips, and reminders when new editions of The Lesser Squawk are published. You may also send a note to membership@charlestonaudubon.org and we'll add your email address to the mailing list.

Calendar of Events

May 19th, 7 am - 2 pm

FIELD TRIP: BP Property

For our final field trip of the spring we'll make a return visit to the BP Property, which encompasses 6000 acres along the East bank of the Cooper River. Located between Huger and Cainhoy, the land was once the site of two colonial plantations and contains several old brick kilns along the banks of Grove Creek.

As you might imagine there is a mix of habitat including a tidal creek, salt marsh, cypress swamp, mixed hardwood forest, pine savannah and plowed fields. An observation platform overlooks an old rice field. We should see turkeys, herons and egrets, bluebirds, warblers, woodpeckers and raptors.

We will meet in the parking lot behind the IHOP, just off U.S.17, in front of the Mount Pleasant Lowe's ([map](#)) at 7 am. From there we'll car pool to the location. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes as there will be a good bit of walking on hard surface and some rough terrain. You will want to bring insect repellent along with your birding gear. Bring a lunch and water; there are picnic tables and restrooms on site. If you plan to attend please register with Don Jones before May 19th, by calling 572-8232 or email at Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com.

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 Don Jones prior to the scheduled dates: 843.572.8232 or birdfrogdjlj@aol.com.

FIELD TRIP (March 31st): Grove Plantation

The [Grove Plantation](#) (circa 1694) is located on the banks of the South Edisto River. It is part of the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The plantation house, built in 1828, and most recently renovated in 1997, is one of only three antebellum mansions in the ACE Basin to have survived the Civil War.

Fields, marsh and a large impoundment are accessible on well maintained trails. A wide variety of bird species is possible here including herons, egrets, ibis, rails, shorebirds, raptors and upland birds. The spring migration will be underway so warblers, Purple Martins, swallows and tanagers might also be seen.

We will meet at 7 am in the Food Lion parking lot, near the intersection of S.C. 165 and U.S.17 in Ravenel ([map](#)). We'll carpool as much as possible for the 1 hour drive to Grove Plantation. Bring food and water; there are picnic tables and rest rooms on the property. There will be a moderate amount of walking involved on this outing. Please register with Don Jones prior to March 31st by calling 572-8232 or by email to Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com.



USFWS

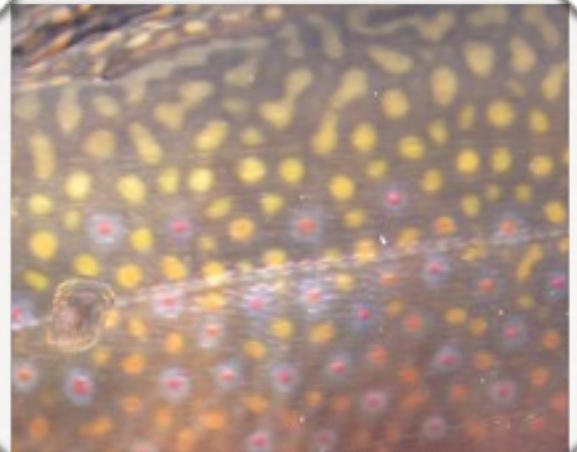
Naturalist



Olympics

As we are approaching warmer weather, we thought it would be great to show off some skin! Here, we have an up-close shot of a *native* fish in its spawning colors. Email your response for this fourth competition to naturalistolympics@gmail.com. A fifth event--and the ID of the fish--will be announced in the next Lesser Squawk.

Thanks to everyone who competed in our Naturalist Olympics, as described in the January/February issue of [The Lesser Squawk](#). As 1/2 of the of the entrants correctly replied, the flower you see here is a Prickly Pear Cactus flower.



LECTURE (April 11th): South Carolina's Alligators: A Unique Resource



Note: on April 11 we are meeting in our regular location, the auditorium in the main branch of the Charleston County Library at 68 Calhoun Street (and we will begin at 6:00 PM as usual).

At our Wednesday, April 11 meeting, [Dr. Thomas Rainwater](#), a Wildlife Ecotoxicologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will swamp us with information on American alligator ([Alligator mississippiensis](#)) biology and explain why these top predators are so important in SC coastal wetlands. During his talk Thomas will also reveal what distinguishes a particular Lowcountry alligator population from others around the planet.

A native of Florence, SC, Dr. Rainwater earned a B.S. at Furman University in 1989, an M.S. in Environmental Toxicology at Clemson University in 1994 and a Ph.D. in Environmental Toxicology at Texas Tech University in 2003. From 2003-2010 he worked on numerous research projects in the U.S. and abroad (Belize, Costa Rica, India) examining the influence of environmental stressors (pollution, habitat loss, overexploitation) on wildlife, particularly crocodilians, turtles and birds. From January 2011 to February 2012, Thomas was a Research Scientist at the Medical University of South Carolina and Hollings Marine Laboratory, working in the lab of Dr. Louis Guillette on the ecology, reproductive biology and ecotoxicology of wild crocodilians. Since February 2012 he has worked as a Wildlife Ecotoxicologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (based in Charleston, SC) on issues pertaining to the influence of environmental pollution on wildlife and wildlife habitat in SC.

FIELD TRIP (April 14th): Briar's Creek

Briar's Creek is a residential community and golf course located on 600 acres on the banks of Chaplin Creek, not far from Kiawah Island. The development plan left a large portion 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 waterfowl and the nearby salt marsh provide habitat for many other species. On past visits to this location we have seen between 55 and 65 species. On our last visit we counted 57 species.

There are rest rooms at several locations on the site but lunch may be on the go, so plan to carry some food and water with you as we bird. We will meet in the shopping center parking lot at the intersection of Folly Rd. (SC 171) and Maybank Hwy. (SC 700) at 7:30AM ([map](#)), and car pool from there. We will bird until mid-afternoon so bring a snack or lunch, binoculars, and insect repellent. To register, contact Don Jones by April 12th so that we can give our host an accurate head count. To register, call 572-8232 or by email at Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com.

LECTURE (May 9th): Birding in Cuba

Note: on May 9 we are meeting in our regular location, the auditorium in the main branch of the Charleston County Library at 68 Calhoun Street (and we will begin at 6:00 PM as usual).

On Wednesday, May 9, Ms. Cornelia Carrier, longtime board member and past President of the Charleston Natural History Society, will present a program on her birding trip to Cuba in 2011. The largest island in the Caribbean, Cuba has a wide variety of habitats, and around 370 species of birds have been reported there (with 28 endemic species). The highlights of the talk will be the birds she observed, of course, but Cornelia will also describe her experiences with transportation and life in Cuba.

After graduating from Tulane University, Ms. Carrier earned a Master's degree from the University of California, Berkeley. During her career in journalism (as the environmental writer for the New Orleans Times-Picayune), she was awarded a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University. She also served as Louisiana's Director of Tourism and was one of the first Directors to promote birding trails in that state. Now retired, her last position was teaching Italian at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC.



BIRD-A-THON AND SPRING BIRD COUNT

MAY 6th

www.CharlestonAudubon.org

Make a Pledge!

You can pledge a fixed amount (\$10, \$25 or \$50, for example) or pledge a specific amount per species identified. In recent years we have observed between 140 and 160 species on a typical Spring Count.

Don't hesitate to ask friends, relatives and neighbors to support the Birdathon!

More details about how to pledge and a downloadable pledge form will be available soon on our [website](http://www.CharlestonAudubon.org).

It's that time again! The Charleston Spring Bird Count and Birdathon will be held this year on Sunday, May 6. Our chapter has conducted the Spring Count for many years, and the data we collect is extremely valuable in detecting long-term trends in bird populations. The money we raise during this year's Birdathon will be used to support ongoing work at our McAlhany Nature Preserve and other local chapter activities. We just completed a successful prescribed burn on January 28 in three units of the Longleaf Pine Restoration Project at MNP, and the ditch filling and grading work for our wetland restoration project was completed on August 31, 2011. Volunteers planted 20 Pond Cypress seedlings and 40 fern root masses in the new wetland in January, and plans are in place to plant three native species of nursery grown pitcher plants (as well as seed from numerous other wetland plants) there this spring. We just need some more rain!

Our 15-mile diameter "count circle" (the same area used on the Charleston Christmas Bird Count) is divided into territories, and groups of observers – led by experienced birders – record the numbers of species and individuals they see or hear in their territory over the course of the day. This is birding with a purpose, but it is usually a lot of fun, too!

Sign up for the count: Birders of all skill levels are welcome to participate on the Spring Count. Becoming involved in a count is a good way to improve your birding abilities! Contact Andy Harrison at 795-6934 or parula23@aol.com for more information.

Please be patient when awaiting results – tabulating the data and verifying any unusual sightings after the count day may take a week or more (after all, we want to maintain a high-quality dataset for the long-term record). Whether you join us for the Spring Count or make a donation to the Birdathon (or both), you will be supporting a very worthy cause. Thanks very much!

Charleston Natural History Society 2011 Birdathon and Spring Count Pledge Form

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

eMAIL: _____

Sending your donation now?

MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

The Charleston Natural History Society

CHECK
ONE

MY PLEDGE

☐

I would like to pledge \$_____ per species seen during the 2011 Birdathon. (i.e. if we find 135 species, a \$.25 pledge would equal \$33.75)

☐

I would like to contribute \$_____ to the 2011 Birdathon effort. (i.e. \$25, \$50, \$75...)

Please Mail all pledges/donations to:

Andy Harrison
CNHS Birdathon Coordinator
35 Cross Creek Drive, APT. P-7
Charleston, SC 29412

Use the form below to sign-up sponsors and take their pledges. (You can use a pad or make your own form as long as you collect all the data.) Contact the Birdathon coordinator, Andy Harrison (at 795-6934 or by eMail at parula23@aol.com) and you'll be contacted after the count is compiled so that you can calculate and collect your sponsors' pledges.

Use the form above to make a pledge or donate a fixed amount. Donations may be sent immediately. If you return a pledge, you will be contacted, by phone or email, after the Spring Count totals have been compiled and asked to fulfill the pledge amount.



Charleston Natural History Society 2011 Birdathon and Spring Count Pledge Sign-Up

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE #	PLEDGE INFO			PAID Y/N	NEW AUDUBON MEMBER?
			\$/per species	fixed donation	TOTAL		

After collecting all pledges and donations, please mail them, along with your name and contact information, and this form, to:

Andy Harrison, CNHS Birdathon Coordinator, 35 Cross Creek Drive, APT. P-7, Charleston, SC 29412

CNHS Board

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paulnolancnhs@gmail.com

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paintedbuntinglady@gmail.com

Species Highlight: Moon Snail

Moon snails are univalves (one shell) that plow through the soft sands of the swash zone. They are gastropods, (literally stomach-foot), and when they are moving through the sand, most of the shell is completely covered by the snail. (Which is why recently dead snails have very shiny shells.) The front part of the foot is used for digging, and the mantle surrounds the shell to streamline the shape and allow it to move through the sand, below the surface. The foot takes in water to expand and [propel the snail](#) through the sand. When disturbed, the moon snail expresses that water and withdraws the foot into the shell, closing off completely with an operculum.



Judy Drew Fairchild

These molluscs have a radula, a sort of toothy-tongue apparatus, which can be used to [bore a hole into the shell of a bivalve](#). The snail also secretes an acidic solution, which helps dissolve the shell of the prey as well as with eventual digestion. (A naturalist once described this operation to us as “lick-n-spit”.)

Here, we interrupted a meal– you can see the coquina clam, helpless against the onslaught, has almost been bored through by a moon snail. The “jewelry shells” you find on the beach with perfect holes were likely preyed upon by a moon snail or similar gastropod. In our tidal sands, we most often find them with coquina shells, but they are also cannibalistic. You may find moon snail shells on the beach with the tell-tale drilled hole. Other predators of moon snails include sea stars.

Moon snails also leave evidence of egg laying on the beach. Their [egg cases](#) are called sand collars and are frequently mistaken for plastic trash on the beach. Eggs are laid in a round collar cemented together with sand and mucus. As with other egg cases, you may be able to see where the young snails hatched.

- Judy Drew Fairchild

Other Interesting Events in the Lowcountry:

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

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Citizen Science, Get Involved!

This Citizen Science spotlight will highlight the project called Budburst. This interactive project focuses on the effects of climate change on the timing of plant cycles. Anyone can participate and it's all free. Everything you need can be found on their website. As an active participant you can adopt a plant to observe throughout the year. Don't have the time to commit to a whole year or a specific plant? You can also be a Single reporter. This enables you to record sightings on your travels.



Project Budburst is a cooperative effort of thousands of citizens in all 50 states. The data collected is used by a network of scientists to observe and track the changes in the plant community caused by global climate change. On the website you can monitor the data as it comes from observers around the nation. Some species Project Budburst is monitoring include many that occur in our area like Red Maple, Dandelions, Bald Cypress, Longleaf Pine, Southern Magnolia, Southern Live Oak, and many more! On their website you can find state specific lists of plants so you can narrow down your study subjects!

For more information, or to sign up, visit their [website](#).

• Jennifer Tyrrell: Jennifer.tyrrell@avianconservationcenter.org



Energy & Recycling Tips: 10 Plastic Things You Didn't Know You Could Recycle

- 1) **Bottle and jar caps:** [Weisenbach Recycled Products](#) accepts clean plastic bottlecaps, plastic jar caps, flip-top caps from personal care products, and flexible snap-on lids (e.g. butter tub lids) to turn into funnels and other items. In Charleston, you can recycle along with other plastics. Also, you can take these to an Aveda salon: Caps for Aveda.
- 2) **Brita pitcher filters:** [Preserve's Gimme 5](#) program accepts Brita-brand pitcher filters for recycling.
- 3) **Compostable bioplastics:** Find a municipal composter at [FindaComposter.com](#).
- 4) **Computers and other electronics:** Find the most responsible recyclers near you at e-stewards.org/find-a-recycler. Your local [Best Buy](#) store will also accept many types of electronics, large and small—from televisions and gaming systems to fans and alarm clocks. Best Buy partners with responsible recyclers that do not ship items overseas, including [Green Business Network™](#) member Electronic Recyclers International. You can bring three small items per day to Best Buy for free. The company charges a fee to recycle large electronics.
- 5) **Eyeglasses:** Your local [Lions Club](#) collects them for people in need.
- 6) **Ink Cartridges:** [RecyclePlace.com](#) pays \$1 each and will recycle them.
- 7) **Pantyhose/tights:** [No Nonsense](#) collects all brands of hose, tights, and knee-highs to be recycled into other products.
- 8) **Plastic packaging:** Many pack-and-ship stores will take packing peanuts and bubble wrap. For drop-off locations for foam blocks, contact the [Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers](#).
- 9) **Polypropylene (#5) plastics (all types):** [Preserve's Gimme 5](#) program accepts all types of clean #5 plastics, which are turned into Preserve personal care and kitchen products. Drop them off in the "Gimme 5" container available at select Whole Foods and food co-ops.
- 10) **Tennis balls:** [reBounces](#) restores old tennis balls that have lost their bounce.

• Ann Shahid: rashahid@att.net

A Quote From a Recent Visitor to McAlhany Preserve

"What a pristine property the McAlhany Nature Preserve is! We loved the mosses, light and sounds on the river bluff hike, and the enormous trees. The birds were a treat as well. What was most compelling though was the condition of the property. The trails were beautifully blazed and maintained. The only sound was the crunching of leaves. It really shows the difference it makes to protect and nurture the land. As we drove home, it was apparent that the land around it was much different because of human habitation. Thank goodness there are a few places where nature can thrive without interference. Thank you for sharing the property with us. It was inspiring."

• Sheila Seaman & John Nee



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