

THE LESSER SQUAWK

www.charlestonaudubon.org

Newsletter of the
Charleston Audubon &
Natural History Society

DON'T MISS EVENTS!

FIELD TRIP: Bonneau Ferry WMA

The Bonneau Ferry WMA is located east of Moncks Corner on RT. 402 between Cordesville and Huger. It contains 10,700 acres of mixed pine and hardwood forest including several stands of long leaf pine. In addition there are freshwater features and open areas that are maintained for wildlife. There will be a minimum amount of walking on this outing as most of the birding will be from the roadside. We can expect to see between 45 and 60 species including warblers, vireos, woodpeckers, wading birds and raptors. The property contains the ruins of the historic Comingtee Plantation circa 1738, as well as an old rice mill that was part of the plantation. If there is interest, and time permitting, we can visit this site.

We'll meet in the large parking lot in front of the Publix Food Market, just off of SC 176 in Goose Creek ([map](#)), at 7 AM (about 1 mile west of the intersection of SC 52 and SC 176). From there we'll carpool for the one hour drive to Bonneau Ferry. Bring your lunch, your birding gear and bug spray. There are no picnic areas or rest rooms at this site. If you plan to attend please register with Don Jones prior to April 29th, by calling 843-572-8232 or by email at Birdfrogdjlj@aol.com.

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 (and we will begin at 6:00 PM as usual, with snacks and socializing before Ms. Carrier begins her presentation at 6:30).

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 [23 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. Now retired, her last position was teaching Italian at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC.

Calendar of Events

April 29th, 7am - 2pm

FIELD TRIP: Bonneau Ferry WMA

See article on the left for more details.

May 6th, 7am - 2pm

EVENT: Bird-a-thon & Spring Bird Count

See flyer on pages 3 & 4 for more details.

May 9th, 6 - 8 pm

LECTURE: Birding in Cuba

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

See article on the left for more details.

May 19th, 7 am - 2 pm

FIELD TRIP: BP Property

See article on page 5 for more details.

More Information

For more information check out our [calendar online](#) 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.

President's Notes

I've been doing a lot of yoga lately on my Wii Fit game console, to help with a bad back (and at least partially to justify the price I paid for it :-). I thought it was sort of a joke that the first exercise they ask you to do is "deep breathing" and sitting calmly, but it turns out to be much harder than I'd expected. Maybe it's because we all face pressure to accomplish so much on a given day, or because we seem to have so many sources of information and stimulus bombarding us constantly, but the exercise of focusing on nothing or on one simple thing at a time takes a special effort. I'm thinking of it in the context of a column for CNHS because it's a great lesson to apply to the study of a single bird as you debate exactly which vireo it is, or a single dragonfly as you search for tell-tale marks. Narrowing my attention to a particular subject often has the added bonus of letting me notice other, more subtle details I'd overlooked at first glance.

In an attempt to apply this idea to my writing I'll resist my usual inclination to discuss all the events we still have coming up before we slow down for the summer—you can easily find those for yourself, here in the *Lesser Squawk*, on our [facebook](#) page, [webpage](#), emails etc—and will focus on one thing: saying

thank you to the many people who made our group run smoothly over the last year. Our Board and officers, our volunteers, our newsletter and webpage editors, property manager, new education committee (more on that in the Fall, stay tuned ;-) and many more spent countless hours furthering our goals of education and conservation. I encourage you to recognize their efforts when you run into them (or, even better, become one of them by getting involved as an officer or volunteer!).

In particular, though, I need to mention the contribution of Don Jones, who will be stepping back from his role as leader of all of our outings after the end of this season. I knew when I began my time as President that I was spoiled by having such a tireless, patient, and good-humored man willing to shoulder the large amount of work involved in planning and executing so many excellent field trips. Many of you know that I'm not a morning person, and so the early start times



needed to catch the peak bird activity often elude me, but the chance to take part in Don's trips always made it worthwhile when I was able to drag myself to Ravenel (or North Charleston, or West Ashley, etc) by 7:00 AM. Although Don will still lead trips occasionally, Andy Harrison has graciously agreed to coordinate a group of field trip leaders who will continue to offer an exciting variety of outings taking us around the Lowcountry beginning in the Fall.

In the meantime, I hope you'll get outside, whether in a garden, on a path, or paddling a kayak in the marsh, and spend some time just listening and breathing. There's a lot to see, especially when you focus on just one thing :-)

• Paul Nolan,
paulnolancnhs@gmail.com

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



Charleston's Natural History
Society Since 1905

BIRDATHON

AND Spring Bird Count

May 6, 2012

www.CharlestonAudubon.org

PARTICIPATION

There are three easy ways to participate:

1. MAKE A PLEDGE

You can pledge a fixed amount (\$15, \$30 or \$50, for example) or pledge a specific amount per species identified. (We usually observe between 140 and 160 species on a Spring Count). Make your pledge via e-mail to parula23@aol.com (please put Spring Bird Count in the subject line) or mail-in the pledge form (see reverse).

New this year you may pay using PayPal through the links on our website – whether you pledge-per-species, or choose to make a fixed donation, Paypal is a safe, secure way to make your donation – no PayPal account is required.

2. SIGN-UP SPONSORS

Don't hesitate to ask friends, relatives and neighbors to support the Birdathon! You can distribute copies of the small pledge form for donations, or have sponsors sign-up on the larger form and collect their pledged amounts after the Spring Count (totals will be available 7-10 days after the May 6th Count).

Extra forms can be downloaded from the website: www.charlestonaudubon.org.

3. JOIN THE COUNT

Anyone, whether you're an experienced birder or just getting started, is encouraged to participate in the Spring Count. Groups – each led by an experienced birder – will record the numbers of species and individual birds they identify in their assigned territory over the course of the day. Afterward all of the team reports are compiled into a single report.

To join the count, please contact Andy Harrison who is coordinating this year's Count and Birdathon: Call 795-6934 or email parula23@aol.com

The Charleston Audubon Society Spring Bird Count will be held on Sunday, May 6. Our chapter has conducted this count for many years, and the data we collect is extremely valuable in detecting long-term trends in bird populations.

Once again this year's count is a fundraising effort through our annual Birdathon! Money we raise will be used to support on-going work at our McAlhany Nature Preserve (MNP) and other chapter activities. We completed a prescribed burn at the Longleaf Pine Restoration Project in January, and ditch filling and grading for our wetland restoration project was completed last August. In January volunteers planted Pond Cypress seedlings and fern root masses in the new wetlands, and we plan to plant three native species of nursery-grown Pitcher Plants (with a variety of other wetland plants) this spring.

Our 15-mile "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.

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

AND AFTERWARD...

Our birding party with the highest species total and the donor making the largest contribution to the Birdathon will receive special recognition for their accomplishment. 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 in support of the Birdathon (or both), you will be taking part in a very worthy cause.

— Thanks very much!

Charleston Natural History Society 2012 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 2012 Birdathon. (i.e. if we find 135 species, a \$.25 pledge would equal \$33.75)

☐

I would like to contribute \$_____ to the 2012 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 paid online with PayPal, or 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 2012 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

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.

Longleaf Pines

Longleaf pines once [covered over 90 million acres](#) across the southeastern United States, reaching from Virginia to eastern Texas. This ecosystem had been in place for thousands of years, no doubt aided by the frequent forest [fires set by Native Americans](#) because longleaf pine is a fire-adapted species; in fact it is the keystone species in a fire-adapted environment. Frequent fires kept out other, less well adapted plants and animals, prepared the ground to receive the longleaf pine seeds, and allowed these magnificent trees to dominate the coastal plain of the southeast. The trees and the fires both supported a whole host of [plants and animals](#) that were adapted to regular, small intensity fires and could grow in the filtered shade of the longleaf. The result was an ecosystem that is one of the most ecologically diverse in the world and is home to some of the most rare and unique plants and animals on the continent.

It is estimated that around three and a half million acres of longleaf pine forest remain in the region,

about 3% of the original. Compare that to the 65% of remaining wetlands in the southeast, and the forty three percent of the remaining rainforest in the world, and one can see just how endangered our longleaf pine forest really is. And even the 3% figure is probably too high because many of the longleaf pine forests are not managed and no longer actually support the ecosystem that accompanied these outstanding trees. The destruction of the forest, and more importantly the destruction of the ecosystem, has resulted in twenty nine plants and animals ending up on the federally-listed threatened or endangered species list.

Fortunately today there are a number of government and non-profit organizations working to bring back the longleaf pine. A variety of [grants](#) are available to promote the planting of longleaf pines, and much information is available to landowners on the proper management to insure their survival. These efforts are paying off and it is believed that



we are now seeing an increase in longleaf pine acreage across the region. Most of this increase is happening among large private landowners who are planting the trees for a variety of reasons, one of which is a strong conservation ethic. But there are also good economic reasons to consider planting longleaf pine. They are more drought resistant than other pine species, more resistant to hurricanes and many insect pests, and provide better quality timber and habitat for bobwhite quail and wild turkey.

If you are interested in finding out more about efforts to increase the acreage of longleaf pines check out the Longleaf Alliance website at www.longleafalliance.org.

• Steve Moore

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paulnolancnhs@gmail.com

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SPECIES HIGHLIGHT: Toothache Tree

Adapted from Dewees Island Blog

Xanthozylum Clava-Hercules is a plant that is blooming right now, and it seems to be host for a wide variety of pollinators that are drawn to it. This plant is also known as Toothache Tree, Hercules Club, or Southern Prickly Ash. It is a pretty amazing tree native to the Lowcountry. Native Americans probably would have taught the early settlers about the medicinal properties of this tree. Dewees Island Ecologist, Lori Sheridan Wilson, often gives a taste of it to students when she is on an ecology tour of the island. "You can chew the bark or leaves and experience a numbing sensation that relieves a toothache," she says, breaking off a piece to share.

On mature trees, the bark is covered with large, spiny protuberances (hence the name prickly ash), and it loses its leaves in the winter. The tree loves calcium rich soils, and is sort of a barrier island specialist, tolerating salt spray periodically. It is a native citrus relative, and a host tree for the [Giant Swallowtail Butterfly](#), whose caterpillars actually resemble bird droppings as a



Photo Courtesy of Judy Fairchild

way of camouflage. I've seen one bush covered with pollinators of all shapes and sizes: from ants to bees to wasps and hornets to butterflies and moths. A mockingbird even hopped from branch to branch, snacking on the insects that were drawn to the blooms.

• Judy Fairchild

Social Media Sharing

Our [facebook page](#) generates a lot of interest and interactions with members, as we highlight a variety of natural history and conservation topics from the Lowcountry and around the world. Here are the top 5 stories from our facebook page, as measured by users' interest over the last month:

1. [Look at what's happening at the Center for Birds of Prey--it's a great time to visit them :-\)](#)
2. [An eagle doing the breast stroke! Watch the lengths this bird goes to in the course of getting a meal.](#)
3. [Wetland Restoration Project](#)
4. [It's hard to believe that these little guys grow up into sandhill cranes.](#)
5. [The red knots are currently in the Lowcountry, with lots of them being seen at Beachwalker Park on Kiawah.](#)

See new, top stories in 'first-run', by liking our facebook page and visiting it regularly!

• Paul Nolan

Smart Phone Apps for Nature Lovers

Pick up a new, exciting hobby during your next outing with the [Geocaching](#) app by Groundspeak Inc. Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunt created for you by millions of users. Geocachers hide small waterproof containers holding items, called “geocaches,” in a high-tech game of hide-and-seek. The geocaches usually contain small trinkets to take with you to your next geocache or logbooks, where you sign your name for fellow geocachers to see. Using your phone’s built-in GPS, and this smartphone app, you can find geocaches set up throughout the Charleston area.



The [Geocaching app](#) allows you to find the closest geocaches to your current location and view photos, clues, and hints to help find your next geocache. Groundspeak, Inc. offers a free Geocaching Intro app, which allows you to view three geocaches, and the all-inclusive Geocaching app for \$9.99. The apps are available for iPhone, iPad, iPod touch, and Android phone devices.

- Caitlin Black

Naturalist



Olympics

We are showing more skin for this edition of Naturalist Olympics! Here, we have an up-close shot of a *native* reptile. Email your response for this fourth competition to naturalistolympics@gmail.com. A fifth event--and the ID of the reptile--will be announced in the next *Lesser Squawk*.

Thanks to everyone who competed in our Naturalist Olympics, as described in the March/April issue of [The Lesser Squawk](#). As all of the entrants correctly replied, the native fish is a [Brook Trout \(*Salvelinus fontinalis*\)](#)

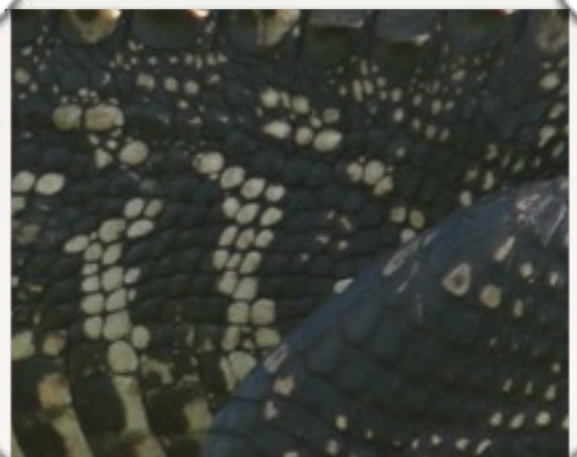


Photo Courtesy of Pamela Corwin

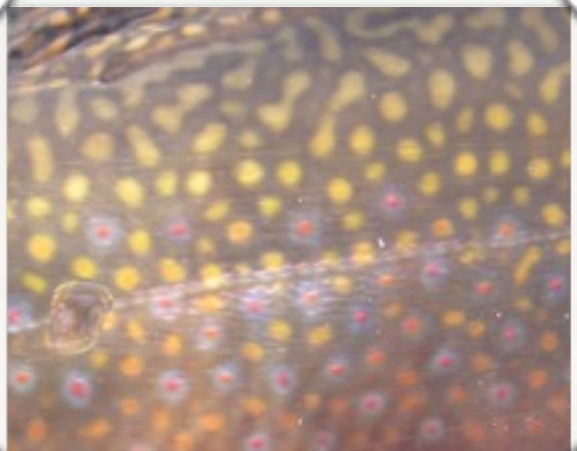


Photo Courtesy of Pamela Corwin

Citizen Science, Get Involved!

Today the citizen science spotlight shines on an awesome new program called [Yardmap](#). The basic idea of the program is to make maps of habitat you're most familiar with, your yard, gardens, parks, even your favorite birding spot. By making habitat maps you can better understand your direct impact on the ecosystem and wildlife.

By [managing backyard habitats](#) with birds in mind you can directly and positively impact bird survival. After you've made a map of your backyard habitat, you can receive direct feedback on how you can improve your yard for the wildlife.

The data produced helps scientists understand how birds are using urban landscapes and how we can improve those habitats to better suite the birds we are trying to help. Map your yard today and discover a network of folks in your area doing the same thing!



- Jennifer Tyrrell: Jennifer.tyrrell@avianconservationcenter.org

Other Interesting Events in the Lowcountry:

- Francis Beidler Forest
- Birds of Prey Raptor Center
- Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center



Energy & Recycling Tips: Use Outdoor Solar Lights During Power Outage

If you have outdoor solar lights, here's a tip for you. If you don't, you may decide to buy a few for your yard.

During a power outage, bring in your outdoor solar lights to give you light. Most will fit into a soda bottle, which can be filled with pebbles, marbles, sand, etc. to keep it from tipping over. If you don't have a soda bottle in your recycling bin, be creative with something to hold the light...a potted plant, for instance. Not only are they safe, they do not require batteries or fuel. They can be placed back outside during the day and brought back in if the outage is an extended one.

- Ann Shahid

If you have any energy & recycling tips you'd like to share, please contact Ann Shahid at rashshid@att.net.



Audubon Society Supports School Sustainability Symposium

In early March we received a request from Maggie Harrelson, the CCSD's Sustainable Schools Initiative Coordinator, asking if Charleston Audubon would help with a Middle and High School Sustainability Symposium. Not wanting to say no we simply answered "we'll do our best." As luck would have it we found a donor who supplied (at no cost to Audubon) what Maggie and their group requested of us which were 80 tote bags and 175 notepads for the youths attending the symposium. We included our black and white Charleston Audubon logo on the items we donated.

The symposium was held on Friday, March 30th at North Charleston City Hall from 9:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Several local community partners in addition to Audubon showed support by donating their time and/or promotional items.





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

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