Save the Date! The Great Backyard Bird Count is February 12 - 15. Record the birds in your own yard and enter the tally online. The counting is fun, fast, free AND it makes a difference for your local birds. Hosted by the National Audubon Society and Cornell’s Lab of Ornithology. For more information, see www.birdcount.org.

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Native Plants: Dogwood
For gardeners, there is everything to like about the Flowering Dogwood: the bright white flowers, wine-red fall color, and clusters of brilliant red berries in winter. For birds, those berries are the big attraction in cold weather but come spring, they’ll be looking for protein for their nestlings. Dogwoods serve up caterpillars in plenty and feed such beauties as the Spring Azure butterfly and the Polyphemus Moth. A bird-friendly plant indeed!

Upcoming Activities
Details for these activities are on our website www.capefearaudubon.org

Monday, February 8, 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Monthly meeting. Photographer Dick Daniels will speak on the birds of Yellowstone National Park. Location: Trinity United Methodist
Church, 209 E. Nash St, Southport

**Tuesday, February 16, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.**
**Birding at Brunswick Town.** Waterfowl, woodpeckers, wintering songbirds and possible Rusty Blackbirds. **Directions:** Meet at Brunswick Town Visitors Center.

**Saturday, February 20, 9 - 11 a.m.**
**Birding at Wrightsville Beach/Mercer Pier.** Shorebirds, gulls, wintering seabirds and ducks. **Directions:** Meet at the northernmost parking lot near Shell Island Resort.

**Who's New**
We extend a hearty welcome to new member:
Sonny Hines, Lenoir
Beth Sheppard, Wilmington
And as always, our thanks to our renewing members who keep us going!

Invasive exotic plants have taken over much of the "wild" land in our area. Many of these plants were first sold as wildlife plants and that has been part of the problem. Their fruits or seeds are very attractive to birds who deposit them far from the yard where they were first planted.

If birds like them so much, what’s the problem? The answer is complex. Take Privet for example. Chinese Privet is like fast food to birds on migration - easy to find and to eat. In nesting season, it provides important cover. But in places where Privet gets a toehold, it soon becomes the only shrub around. And few native insects can eat it.

An insect-free plant is a big problem for birds come nesting season. Birds need insects to feed their nestlings. Studies done so far show that in areas overgrown with exotic plants, nestlings grow more slowly, are smaller overall, and have higher mortality rates. And that’s a problem for bird lovers too.

**Bird-Friendly Habitat:**
**Invasive Plants**

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Invasive Chinese Privet, Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, Bugwood.org

A Sea of Kudzu
Native Insects: Spiders

Now that the spiders are either dead or deep under leaf litter, it’s a good time to reconsider their sinister reputation. The Orchard Orbweaver, for instance, is a gaudily patterned though tiny beauty. It can be found in or near woods in our area.

And Wolf Spiders are excellent mothers. They glue their egg sack to their abdomen and carry it around until the eggs hatch. The spiderlings then crawl up on the mother’s back where they will stay until they are old enough to hunt for themselves.

You Can Help! by Dick Daniels

In an earlier article I described how I literally see things differently because I am color challenged. But we all perceive life differently. Our life experiences have shaped us, and likewise our genes. Another factor that greatly affects how I perceive life is that I am an engineer by training. As such I like to be organized, to be efficient, to optimize, to get the most I can out of life.

Recently the engineering side of me realized that to publish such a good newsletter as the Skimmer must take a lot of time. I talked with Cary, our editor (and also President!), and she confirmed my suspicions. This newsletter does take up a lot of the time she is able to allot to the Cape Fear Audubon Society. The good news is that Cary does such a great job. The bad news is that the time involved may discourage someone in the future from volunteering to be President of CFAS.

But we can all help! We all have something to share about birding that other members might find fascinating and certainly interesting. Is there a special place you like to go birding in our area? What have you done to enhance the experiences for birds and you in your back yard? Tell us about a funny, emotional, or amazing experience you had while birding. Share part of your life experience with us and help others enjoy birding even more.
As one small step in helping the CFAS Skimmer out, please let us know a topic you would be interested in writing about. From my personal experience, Cary will probably respond enthusiastically, the article will slowly germinate in your subconscious, and before you know it you will be a published birder!

Read Me!

*Spiders of the Carolinas* by L. L. Gaddy is a field guide to 100 of our local spiders. It's well organized with clear photographs and interesting facts. Spiders may surprise you with their beauty!

Parting Shot...

Pileated Woodpecker Eating Dogwood Berries. Copyright © 2009 by John B. Ennis

Comments and submissions welcome. Please send them to Cary Paynter, dmpaynter@earthlink.net