Save the Date! Ibis Fest will be held May 14-15 in Southport. Join CFAS and the City of Southport in celebrating the return of White Ibises to nesting areas!

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Hog Island Reopens!
The National Audubon Society will reopen its legendary Hog Island for four adult ornithology sessions and one teen bird studies session during the summer of 2010. Dr. Steve Kress, Audubon’s VP for Bird Conservation, will direct the sessions. Instructors are some of the country’s top ornithologists, including Kenn Kaufman, Pete Dunne, and Scott Weidensaul. For more information, see www.projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps.

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

Monday, January 11, 7 - 8:30 p.m.
Monthly meeting. Charley Winterbauer will speak on the CFAS Bird-Friendly Habitat Awards Program. Location: Halyburton Park, 4099 S. 17th St., Wilmington.

Tuesday, January 12, 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Saturday, January 16, 8 a.m. - 12 noon.
Birding at Eagle Island. Shorebirds, waterfowl, many raptors and wintering songbirds. Registration required. Call
John Ennis, 910.371.9729 or johnxennis@bellsouth.net. **Directions:**
Meet at the USS North Carolina Battleship parking lot.

**Who's New**
We extend a hearty welcome to new members:
Ann Orsillo, Southport
Donald and Kathleen Ennen, Southport
And as always, our thanks to our renewing members who keep us going!

**Bird-Friendly Habitat:**
**Structure and Birds**
Ornithologists have begun to focus on structure when looking at what makes habitat suitable to a given bird species.

Structure is the sum of the many layers of vegetation which make up a habitat: groundcovers, herbs, low and tall shrubs, sub-canopy and canopy trees and the vines that tie the layers together. Think of it as a series of rooms in a house - the more rooms, the more inhabitants the house can hold.

It's the same for birds. When we add more layers to our yards by planting as many different-sized native plants as we can fit, we are adding more niches for more species of birds to utilize - wrens, sparrows, thrashers and towhees on the ground and in low shrubs; woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees in the sub-canopy; most warblers, tanagers, flycatchers high in the canopy. Winter is the perfect time to look at the yard from a bird's point of view and fill in the layers your yard might be missing.

**Native Insects: Carolina Mantid**
The Carolina Mantid is not as well known as the Praying Mantis, an import. Only 2-4" long and varying in color from green to tan or grey, the Carolina Mantid is our most abundant native mantid and the State Insect of South Carolina. Despite its size, it can take prey as large as a hummingbird.
Now is a good time to look for the cases of the Carolina Mantid adhering to branches or even to the side of the house. Up to 50 larvae will emerge from each case in the spring.

Education Committee Update
The Education Committee is working with Melissa Milstead, 1st grade teacher, to plan a Native Plants/Pollinator Garden at College Park Elementary School. Co-chair Matt Collogan highlighted CFAS’s butterfly and dragonfly curricula at BugFest in Whiteville. He has also taught two 1st grade classes on local birds at the Cape Fear Center for Inquiry.

Color-challenged Birding by Dick Daniels
When I was in kindergarten, I came home and proudly showed off a cow I had colored. That green cow caused my parents to discover that I am “color blind”. Since then I have had many similar experiences: I was in my twenties before I learned why the dollar was called a “greenback”, in my 50’s when learning why certain flowers are called violets, and in my 60’s when I learned that a mallard has a lovely green neck.

Instead of “color blind”, I prefer to consider myself color challenged. The world is not various shades of grey to me. It is full of vibrant colors – blues, yellows, and orange. But on the other hand, red is quite dull! (It’s because of people like me that fire engines are painted yellow.) Colors that can be confusing to me are grey, green, red, and brown. Of course I am not unique. In fact, the majority of color blind people are really just color challenged.

Because I am color challenged, I am also birding challenged. If the color sample is small, such as presented by a distant bird, I am clueless about what color the bird is. Until recently I was convinced that this color handicap would make birding too frustrating for me. But that changed when we bought a house in North Carolina a few years ago. One of our pleasant surprises when settling in here was discovering that birds love it here too. The combination of living in a state where there are hundreds of bird species plus the marvels of digital photography have made me an avid birder.

My first digital camera was bottom-of-the-line, but because of my technical background I quickly fell in love with using a computer to edit and display my
pictures. And most exciting of all, that drab distant bird will often become quite colorful to me after I have cropped and enlarged the image on the computer. While I still don’t find many of the birds to have vibrant colors, the birds can still be beautiful for me to behold.

If I have photographed a bird and the species appears to be a new observation for me, I pay close attention to the size, shape, and general marking of the birds. This approach is usually good enough to help isolate the bird to a specific family. I’ll then use a bird book to try to determine the species. The blue, orange, and yellow colors certainly help in this process. In fact, just realizing that a certain feature could be grey/green/brown and comparing this with the guidebook image can convey a lot of information to me.

But the color challenge certainly can impede the identification process. That’s when Sandy often comes to the rescue. She, as is true for most females, is not color challenged. And while not an avid birder, she does love solving puzzles. Playing “what’s that bird” is a fun game for her and she spends lots of time helping me identify / verify bird species.

Many birders keep lists of birds they have seen and like to compare their “life list” with those of their birding buddies. That doesn’t work for me. Just seeing a bird is often not enough for me to identify a bird. But on the other hand, photographing the birds works for me, and is also a great record of my sightings. The rule I impose on my bird list is that a bird doesn’t count unless I have photographed it.

And a funny thing happened along the way. Now I am not only an avid birder; I am also an avid photographer. In the past I have had an appreciation for art. I can’t draw, but do appreciate art. Birds have become an art form to me. Evolution has created so many beautiful birds, and they are just waiting for me to capture them with my camera.

As my appreciation of the beauty of birds has grown, I have relaxed self-imposed rules of where I can photograph them. Photographing a bird at an aviary is just fine, especially if I can manage to make the setting appear natural. But on my website (carolinabirds.org), I still like to include a not-so-great photo shot in the wild along with a better quality captive photo.

If you are color challenged, or know someone who is, encourage them to purchase a camera and start chasing those birds. We all realize the economy could use a boost!
Read Me!

*The Young Birder’s Guide to Birds of Eastern North America* by Bill Thompson III, editor of Bird Watcher’s Digest, is a fine introduction to birding for children and a great way to introduce your favorite kids to your favorite pastime!

**Parting Shot...**

![Image of Snow Geese and Tundra Swans]

Snow Geese and Tundra Swans: CFAS December Field Trip to Lake Mattamuskeet
Mark Jones, photographer

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