



# CBC Newsletter

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For members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc.,  
Ornithological Society of the Carolinas

Volume 65

October 2019

Number 5

## **CBC Winter Seasonal Meeting—Litchfield Beach SC**

### **Hunting-some-peeps State Park**

**Meeting Planners: Mac Williams**

**January 17 through January 19, 2020**

*by Mac Williams*

The Winter Seasonal Meeting will be held January 17-19, 2020 in the small coastal town of Litchfield Beach, SC, nicknamed "America's First Beach Resort."

Dr. Chris Hill, the Spivey Palmetto Associate Professor of Biology at Coastal Carolina University, is our speaker. Dr. Hill specializes in ornithology. His research interests include bird mating systems and ecology, along with water-bird biology. At various times in his career, he has used tools ranging from binoculars and field notebooks to an automated DNA sequencer to answer various questions in avian biology. He has published more than 15 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals and he also regularly publishes notes in other outlets ranging from newsletters of scientific societies to popular magazines. CBC members might remember him from birding trips or for his famous "Gull Talk." The CBC is delighted that Dr. Hill will again give his entertaining and informative "Gull Talk" at our Saturday evening banquet in Litchfield Beach.



Dr. Chris Hill



Dr. Chris Hill

The Grand Strand boasts several excellent spots for birding; Huntington Beach State Park (HBSP) is its crown jewel, with 331 different species reported in eBird--the top spot in all of South Carolina. The geography of the area, and the wide variety of habitats found on its beaches, inlets, tidal creeks, forests, piers, and jetties allow even brand-new birders the opportunity to see a wide variety of species in large numbers. Your species count for an all-day excursion could easily surpass 50, with 60 or more not out of reach if you're willing to make the walk to the HBSP Jetty! (Continued on page 2)

### **Want to Receive Rare Bird Alerts?**

The Carolina Bird Club is sponsoring a new Rare Bird Alert for South Carolina on the GroupMe platform. To join the RBA, please copy and paste the following link: [https://groupme.com/join\\_group/52879351/5PT34NjX](https://groupme.com/join_group/52879351/5PT34NjX)

The link will guide you through setting up a GroupMe account if you don't have one, and you may also want to download the app from your smartphone. Also pay attention to the instruction to post at least one initial message, to avoid being kicked right back out of the group.

A North Carolina GroupMe Rare Bird Alert, not sponsored by CBC, has been in operation since last year. The link to join that group is [https://groupme.com/join\\_group/44042177/tdYiPA](https://groupme.com/join_group/44042177/tdYiPA)

Communication in these groups is either via text message or through the app. To cut down on distractions for everyone it's requested that you limit communications to sharing timely location and presence information on chaseable "good" or rare birds.

### **In this Issue**

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- Help the Barn Owls

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## CBC Winter Seasonal Meeting—Litchfield Beach SC *(Continued)*

174 different species were recorded at the last Litchfield Winter Meeting in 2016. That time of year, it's not uncommon to spot alcids close to shore at the pier in Myrtle Beach State Park (MBSP). We will have multiple half-day and all-day trips to HBSP both days, as well as one on Sunday morning. We won't stay just in Georgetown County; there are trips planned to Waites Island, Cherry Grove Pier, MBSP, and Francis Marion National Forest (home of many, many Red-cockaded Woodpeckers). Additionally, a variety of field trips will be offered to non-coastal habitats like Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, Francis Marion National Forest, and the Hemingway Sewage Treatment Ponds. Finally, we'll have educational trips for young birders, new birders, and even old grouches to HBSP and to the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw, SC.



Razorbill  
Photo by Cathy Miller



Horned Grebe,  
Photo by Jerry Kershner

In recent winters, eBird participants have posted observations of Razorbills; Henslow's Sparrows; Black-headed, Iceland, and Glaucous Gulls; a Red Phalarope; a Harlequin Duck; a Black Guillemot; a Black-legged Kittiwake; and, of course, there was the excitement in 2019 of the two Snow Buntings that hung out for a long spell near the jetty in HBSP. We will search for Ross's Geese, Snow Geese, Tundra Swans, Long-tailed Ducks, Eurasian Wigeons, Red-necked and Horned Grebes, and maybe the Lark Sparrow will return to MBPS this winter (or maybe the Vermilion Flycatcher will visit Georgetown again!).



Snow Bunting,  
Photo by Ed Blitch

Our host hotel and meeting headquarters is the Litchfield Beach Resort, 14276 Ocean Hwy, Pawleys Island, SC 29585. This hotel offers one-bedroom, one-bath suites with pool or lake views.

Each suite will include 2 queen beds, a sofa bed, a full kitchen, a dining area, a living room, tile walk-in shower, and a balcony. Suites are located just under 1/2 mile from the beach and are next to the main resort complex.



Litchfield Beach Resort

The room rate is an affordable \$94.35 per unit per night and is **inclusive** of state and local taxes, however, each room has a three-night minimum (1-16-20 through 1-19-20), so if you choose to stay at the host hotel, you'll have to book for three nights.

The CBC's group rate is effective until **12/16/19**.

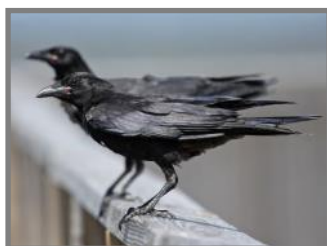
In order to get the group rate, call **1-888-734-8228**, and when they ask for the Group ID, it's **BIRDCLUB20**. Please note that they will charge one night's rate as a deposit. If you cancel your reservation inside of 14 days before arrival, you'll lose your deposit.

Check in time is 4:00 PM EST and check out time is 11:00 AM EST. All guests must be 21 years of age or older to check-in. Pets are **NOT** allowed at the resort. It is a **NON-SMOKING** facility in its entirety.

Your room rate does NOT include breakfast. Both Friday evening's Q&A Session with Aaron Given & Keith McCullough as well as Saturday's banquet and "Gull Talk" with Dr. Hill will have cash bars: Friday at 6:30pm, with programs beginning at 7:15pm and Saturday at 5:30pm with the buffet dinner starting at 6:30pm and our program following at 7:15pm.

Complete Seasonal Meeting details, registration information, and trip descriptions will be in the December 2019 issue of the CBC Newsletter and on our website: [www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org).

As there are untold numbers of Fish Crows along the Grand Strand, if you want to investigate a murder, you're going to need probable caws.



Fish Crows, Photo by Jeff Lewis

## The Grand Strand of South Carolina

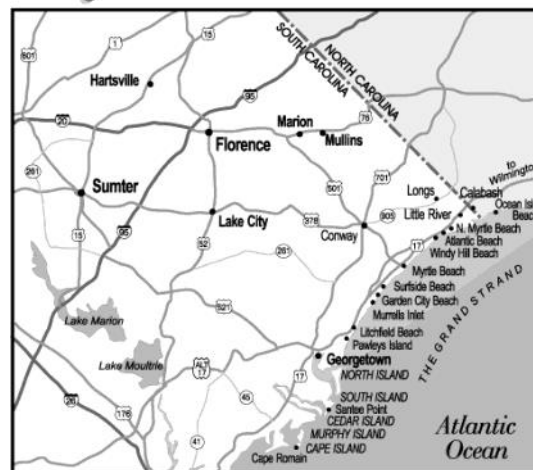
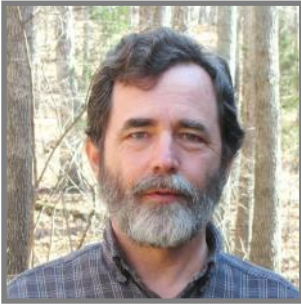


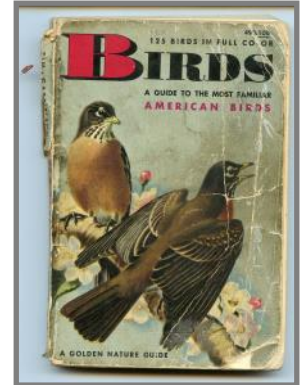
Photo courtesy of scgrandstand.com

# How I Got Into Birding

by Kent Fiala

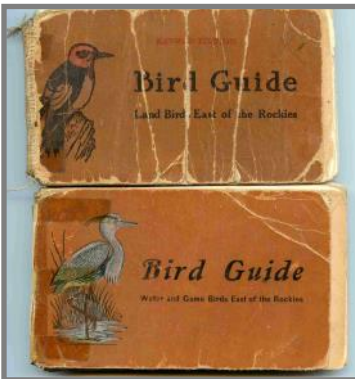


I always had trouble with the long drive to Grandma's house. "Are we there yet?"..."Are we there yet?" My mother had to keep finding ways to keep me occupied. One day when I was in second grade, I was with her on a shopping trip to our tiny bookstore. On impulse, she purchased a copy of the Golden Nature Guide "Birds. A Guide to the Most Familiar American Birds. 125 Birds in Full Color" by Zim and Gabrielson (not to be confused with the Golden Guide to Birds of North America by Robbins, Bruun, and Zim, published several years later). She told me that the book was for me but that I could not have it until the next trip to Grandma's. When I finally got my hands on the book, riding in the car, I was smitten. I loved that book, and from that day on I called myself a birdwatcher.



However, my interest was what might be called an academic interest. I liked reading about birds and looking at pictures of them, but I did not actually learn to see birds. Growing up in Nebraska, I imagined that I was in a bird desert and would have to wait until I grew up and could travel to forests and mountains before I could see birds. I had no one to show me the truth, and I did not discover it on my own.

Beginning in third grade I had a classmate, Mike, who was interested in birds, but we were opposite personality types (introvert/extrovert) and did not become friends. But Mike rode his bike past my house on the way to and from his piano lesson, and one winter day when I was 11, my mother saw him stopped in front of our house, apparently looking at something. She said that he must be looking at some bird and why didn't I go out and talk to him? I said no. Eventually I was persuaded, or coerced, and found that he was looking at a Brown Creeper. I was dumbfounded. I don't think that I have ever again been so completely flabbergasted by anything in my life. I knew all about Brown Creepers. I had read about them in the Burgess Bird Book for Children. But never in my wildest imagining had I supposed that it was possible to see one in Nebraska. And now I was not only seeing one in Nebraska, but IN MY FRONT YARD! It was almost more than I could take, and from that moment Mike and I were best friends. I date my beginning as a birder from that day, not from second grade.



Would it be child abuse today? Our parents allowed us to go out exploring the countryside alone, learning birds. We did have binoculars but neither of us had good field guides. Mike had the coffee-table book *Birds of America* by T. Gilbert Pearson, which was widely sold at the time, and I had my Golden Guide and a set of the already ancient Reed guides. On our very first outing together we saw American Tree Sparrows, another species that I knew all about but never expected to see, and Harris's Sparrows, which were a total revelation to me (but which Mike already knew).

Later that spring we would always see nondescript greenish birds with wing bars that we could never identify. Mike looked through his book and concluded that they were Acadian Flycatchers, but I was not convinced. I looked through my Reed guide and found that the description of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet song, "surprisingly loud and varied for so small a bird," exactly matched our bird, so that was my identification. Arguments ensued. Somehow, we eventually switched sides, with Mike coming over to the Ruby-crowned Kinglet side and me switching to Acadian Flycatcher.

Later, I got my parents to buy me the Peterson Field Guide to Bird Songs of Eastern North America, the only guide on the market at the time. I played the records through from start to finish, and as the Acadian Flycatcher came up, I expected that at last I would be proven right. pizZA!—it sounded absolutely nothing like our bird. Crestfallen, I realized I had been right the first time and should have stuck with the Ruby-crowned Kinglet identification. Then the Ruby-crowned Kinglet came up and it too sounded nothing like our bird. I was really at a loss—I had expected the records to identify our bird, and I still did not know what it was. Suddenly our bird sang from the record player! Bell's Vireo! A bird that was not even illustrated in any book that we had. And the recording was not merely similar to our bird, it WAS our bird, exactly. It was as if someone had traveled to our town, recorded one of our very birds, and put it on the record. It was an electrifying moment for me.

It would be another three years before I met any adult birders, at a meeting of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union. By then, I was already a good birder, but the meetings gave me a lasting appreciation of the value of bird clubs. The Bell's Vireo experience taught me the value of knowing bird songs, and for most of my birding life I really specialized in birding by ear—so much so that someone once said "If a bird doesn't sing, Kent doesn't want to know about it," which wasn't far from the truth.

Sadly, my hearing no longer allows me to be much of an ear-birder, but I am still birding. After 57 years of birding, last year a California Condor got me to 700 species in the original ABA area. There are always new experiences.

Want to share your own "How I Got Into Birding" story?  
Please send your completed story to [newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org).



## Welcome New CBC Members!

Nancy Russo  
Winston-Salem, NC

Lynn Hodgson  
Hilton Head, SC

Charlie Spencer  
Lexington, SC

Layton Register  
Lexington, KY

Sylvia Harris  
Columbia, SC

Gary & Frances Prestash  
Fountain Inn, SC

Hazel Shepherd  
Chapel Hill, NC

Michael Resch  
Pepperell, MA

Kevin & Janice O’Kane  
Washington, NC

Suzanne Roberts  
Durham, NC

Patricia Herrick  
Seneca, SC

Fleeta Wilkinson  
Pittsboro, NC

Carol Adair  
Clemmons, NC

Kathleen Redd  
Huntersville, NC

Rex Badgett  
Jackson Springs, NC

Chris Snook  
Charleston, SC

Judy Fairchild  
Dewees Island, SC

Kim Pittman  
Fort Mill, SC

Lynn Mitchell  
Brandon, FL

Aaron Sanderson  
Mt Pleasant, SC

Vicki Nebes  
Durham, NC

Ronnie Hewlette  
New Bern, NC

Trinity Faucett  
Holly Springs, NC

## The Most Dangerous Bird I have Encountered or Not Encountered

*by William Burke*

For close to forty years many of us have read Bird Watchers Digest. So, the recent death of Bill Thompson has resulted in numerous remembrances by birders all across the country. I never met Bill, but certainly enjoyed the magazine and the many articles he wrote about birding. But the thing I most remember were his podcasts. One in particular really has stayed with me. In this podcast he related his determination to find a life bird and illustrated it with his adventures in North Dakota trying to find a Connecticut Warbler and a Great Gray owl. He had to go climbing deep into the woods to find the warbler, and he succeeded. But that evening he discovered he had over 90 ticks on his body. The next day he went looking for the owl. Again, he had to go deep into the woods, but almost immediately he had to climb down a deep ravine and he injured his ankle. In fact, he could hardly walk because of the severe injury. But again, he was soon rewarded and saw the owl.

How many of us would have returned to those woods after the ticks? Could we have endured the pain to find the owl? Actually, most of the birders I know are similarly obsessed. I must confess I have been willing to take chances to see a life bird. In this case of Bill Thompson, he was rewarded with two life birds. But one bird has really tested me. The Virginia’s Warbler, in my experience, is the most dangerous bird I have yet to find. It is only 4.75 inches long and weighs about a quarter of an ounce. How can such a bird be dangerous? Seriously, I have avoided serious injury three times while trying to find this little gray bird with its faint yellow breast and yellow tail coverts.



Virginia’s Warbler - John Mercer/  
Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab  
([ML67370781](#))

Now of course this warbler is not common and is limited in its range to Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and a corner of South Dakota. So, it is not a day trip to see one. But it does not require climbing a mountain or braving the heat of the desert. Nor do you have to venture out in minus 25-degree weather to see a Northern Hawk Owl in Minnesota. But still, my quest to see the Virginia’s Warbler has brought me close to serious injury on three occasions. My first effort to see the warbler was in South Dakota at an ABA event and ended when our van hit a pothole on the way to the Virginia’s Warbler spot. I was not injured but one of my fellow passengers was. In fact, she was injured seriously enough to require a trip to the emergency room. My next attempt was also in South Dakota, in a very isolated spot. This second attempt was abruptly ended when my good friend Irvin Pitts grabbed me and said stop. With my next step I would have stepped on a Prairie rattlesnake.

Yes, Irvin has photos of the rattler. I was too unnerved to continue the search. On my third try for the bird I had traveled to Utah on a trip led by a terrific guide, Jan Hansen. Jan took us to a small trail where he thought we could find the warbler. He soon found one, but it was in very thick cover. I could hear the bird chip and even got a glimpse of a small gray bird but certainly not a life look. But all of a sudden two beagles came up the trail balling their heads off and bearing their teeth at us. The bird flew and I felt lucky to have avoided being bitten. So if any of you see me on the trail searching for Virginia’s Warbler be warned it could be dangerous.

# Where Have All of the Birds Gone?

By William Burke



At the meeting in Charleston I was manning the registration table while Jill and Craig took a break and in looking at the books on the table, I saw a book I had seen before. But its title, "Where Have All the Birds Gone?," caught my attention." As I leafed through the pages, I remembered how the book documented the large decline of migrants. It was published in 1989. I was also reminded that I had purchased Scott Weidensaul's book, "Living on the Wind," which also documented the loss of many birds. It was published in 1999.

**Nearly 3  
Billion Birds  
Gone Since  
1970.**

Source: *Science*, Sept. 2019.

And just last week, *Science Magazine* published the "Decline of the North American Avifauna" which found that there had been a 30% decline in breeding adult birds in the last fifty years. How staggering is it to hear that we have lost nearly three billion birds?

Despite conservation efforts the trend continues with a loss of 14% since 2007. The three major groups that have recovered are waterfowl (50% increase), raptors (200% increase), and turkeys (4,000% in increase). Why have these "recovered"? Of course hunters and their organizations account for the turkey and waterfowl. Bald Eagles and other raptors have recovered because DDT was banned.

I have to ask, what have we as birders done? Cornell Labs suggested that there are " 7 Simple Things We Can Do."

What can I do to help save our birds?

1. Make windows safer.
2. Keep cats indoors.
3. Reduce lawns by planting native species.
4. Reduce or stop the use of pesticides.
5. Drink shade grown coffee.
6. Protect the planet from plastics.
7. Watch birds and share your data.

Many of these are fairly simple and some quite trying with a cat loving spouse. But I expect that most members of the Carolina Bird Club do most of these things. I believe we must do more, much more than the seven suggestions. For example, we also know that the banning of DDT made it possible for us to have seen Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Merlins, and Kestrels on our field trips this past weekend. We must be vigilant in trying to ban as many pesticides as we can.

As the waterfowl and turkey stories teach us, we must preserve and protect habitat. We as a club have made one significant donation to help the Nature Conservancy to preserve some beautiful river front property in Georgetown County, S.C. We need to help preserve more land.

So I call on all you to let me know your ideas and suggestions. Let's protect and preserve the birds we have left.

A download of the full study published online in *Science*, Sept. 2019 is available on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website at the link below:

<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/DECLINE-OF-NORTH-AMERICAN-AVIFAUNA-SCIENCE-2019.pdf>



## Opportunities for Young Birders

Carolina Bird Club offers scholarships for birders 19 and under living in the Carolinas, who are members of the Carolina Young Birders Club.

Scholarships provide assistance in attending bird-related events, such as camps, workshop, training programs or CBC seasonal meetings.

For more information visit [www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org)

# **Costa Rica: Southern Caribbean to the Cloud Forest**

**December 4-15, 2019**

**Epic Nature Tours led by CBC Members Paul and Amanda Laurent**

## **12 Days, 4 Regions of Birding from the Southern Caribbean to the Cloud Forest**

Over a 12 day period this trip will bird in four different regions of Costa Rica including: Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge, Guayabo Monument, Irazu Volcano National Park, Cahuita National Park, Los Quetzales National Park, and Cerro de la Muerte.

Using local guides, who are experts in their regions, some of the birds we expect to see are Green Macaws, Resplendent Quetzals, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, White-necked Jacobin, Purple-crowned Fairy, Long-billed Hermit, Common Black Hawk, Red-lored Parrot, Black-mandibled Toucan, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Morelet's Seedeater, Palm Tanager, Groove-billed Ani, Long-tailed Tyrant, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, and Collared Aracari.



Keel-billed Toucan



Resplendent Quetzal

### **Trip Snapshot**

**Day 1:** San Jose, Costa Rica

**Days 2-5:** Southern Caribbean Coast

**Day 6:** Indigenous Community Experience (overnight)

**Day 7 & 8:** Ancient Ruins & Volcanoes

**Days 9-12:** Highlands & Cloud Forest



Great Green Macaw



Paul and Amanda at the peak of Cerro de la Muerte. Savegre Valley, San Gerardo de Dota

### **Pricing:**

\$2,449 per person double occupancy with additional \$667.10 for a single occupant. Includes all but 3 meals, ground transportation, lodging, and park admission fees.



Collared Aracari



Great Green Macaws

Registration details are available at [www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org) or [www.epicnaturetours.com](http://www.epicnaturetours.com).  
For additional information: Contact Paul or Amanda Laurent 931-452-9254.

# Wildlife Commission Seeks Public's Help in Barn Owl Sightings and Nest Box Placement

by Jodie B. Owen, NCWRC

*Reprinted with Permission from NCWRC*

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is asking the public to report any sightings of Barn Owls to the agency. Commission biologists are seeking Barn Owl observations to help them learn more about habitat needs and population distribution of Barn Owls in the Tar Heel state. Property owners who have Barn Owls can help further biologists' knowledge by allowing them to place nest boxes on their properties, free of charge.

Currently, Commission staff has placed four boxes on private property in Anson and Randolph counties and Medford would like to expand the number of sites with nest boxes to at least 15 next summer.

Because Barn Owls are nocturnal and secretive, nest boxes will help biologists learn more about where and when Barn Owls nest in North Carolina, as well as where they prefer to hunt. "Our guess is that suitable hunting and nesting habitat is shifting based on changing farming practices and urbanization," said Allison Medford, a wildlife diversity biologist with the Commission, who is spearheading the effort. "We'll want to first visit the property to see what evidence of owls we can find and then put up a nest box either in a building or on an outdoor pole, depending on where we think the owls are already living. It can take a while for Barn Owls to use the box, so we'll monitor it annually."



Photo by Peter K. Burian

Barn Owls are listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the agency's Wildlife Action Plan, a comprehensive planning tool developed by the Commission to help conserve and enhance the state's fish and wildlife species and their habitats. They are difficult to survey using traditional methods, such as point counts and daytime monitoring.

"Special surveys, such as nocturnal surveys and nest box monitoring, are the most effective way we can learn about barn owl distribution and abundance in the state," Medford said.

New Hope Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Chatham, Durham and Orange counties, began the Piedmont Barn Owl Initiative in 2012, installing Barn Owl nest boxes in areas with appropriate habitat. The Commission took oversight of the project in 2017 to broaden the monitoring effort across the

Piedmont and focus on putting boxes where the birds are.

"The agency has been doing this type of work in the mountains for years, but there is not as much open, foraging habitat there as in the Piedmont," Medford said. "This is the first time a large-scale monitoring effort for barn owls has been done in the Piedmont, which is why we are looking for the public's assistance."

Medium-sized raptors, Barn Owls are gray and cinnamon-colored with white bellies. Their most distinctive features are their white, heart-shaped face and dark eyes. Like most owls, they are nocturnal, but they rely on large areas of open lands, such as hay fields, crop lands and pastures, where they hunt rodents and other small mammals.

"Barn Owls are excellent natural rodent control for farmers and cattlemen," Medford said. "A Barn Owl eats an average of 79 pounds of mice per year, which is roughly 3 ½ mice per day. That's some considerable free pest management!"

Barn Owls nest in hollow trees, rock crevices, or large man-made structures like barns, silos and sometimes hunting box blinds. Unlike most birds, Barn Owls do not make nests but rather lay their eggs on piles of their own shredded up pellets. They use their nests as roosting sites throughout the year.

To participate, anyone who spots a Barn Owl and property owners willing to have a nest box placed on their property are asked to contact Medford, [allison.medford@ncwildlife.org](mailto:allison.medford@ncwildlife.org) or 910-975-9393.

For more information about nongame wildlife in North Carolina and the Wildlife Diversity Program, visit the Conserving page — <https://www.ncwildlife.org/Conserving/Conserving-North-Carolinas-Wildlife-Resources>



Carolina Bird Club  
www.carolinabirdclub.org

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and additional mailing offices

## Upcoming CBC Meetings

**Winter** - Litchfield, SC - January 16-19, 2020

**Spring** - Black Mountain, NC - April 30-May 3, 2020

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**Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of  
December, February, April, June, August, and October.**

**[www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org)**

The *CBC Newsletter* is published bimonthly by Carolina Bird Club, Inc. Founded in 1937, the membership is open to anyone interested in birds, natural history, and conservation. **Current dues are:** Individual & non-profit, \$30; Family and Business, \$35; Student, \$15; Patron, \$50 and up; Life, \$500; Associate Life (in household with Life Member), \$100 (both Life memberships can be paid in four annual installments).

**Membership dues** include access to publications: the *CBC Newsletter* and *The Chat*, which is only available on line. Tax deductible as allowable by law.

**Cost for CBC bird checklists**, including postage: 10@\$5.45, 25@\$13.40, 50@\$27.00, and 100@\$54.00.

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