

BIRD NOOZ

Exciting World of Raptors

Large or Small, Their Speed, Skills and Beauty Exhilarate Us



North America's littlest falcon, the **American Kestrel**, packs a predator's fierce intensity into its small body. It's one of the most colorful of all raptors: the male's slate-blue head and wings contrast elegantly with his rusty-red back and tail; the female has the same warm reddish on her

wings, back, and tail. While they hunt for insects and other small prey in open territory, kestrels perch on wires or poles, or hover facing into the wind, flapping and adjusting their long tails to stay in place. Kestrels are declining in parts of their range; you can help them by putting up nest boxes.

THE AMERICAN KESTREL HUNTING BEHAVIOR



Hawklike in Flight

American Kestrels usually snatch their victims from the ground, though some catch quarry on the wing. They are gracefully buoyant in flight, and are small enough to get tossed around in the wind. When perched, kestrels

often pump their tails as if they are trying to balance.

American Kestrels occupy habitats ranging from deserts and grasslands to alpine meadows. You're most likely to see them perching on telephone wires along roadsides in open country.

October 7 Meeting

Where: Hidden Cypress. Santee & Okatie River Rooms

Time: 4 PM

Date: October 7, 2015

Topic: "The Petite Birds of Prey" and *Important Bird Club Business Meeting* (see page 6)

Stephen Schabel, Director of Education at The Avian Conservation Center and its Center for Birds of Prey, will join us, along with some bird friends. Situated near Charleston, the Center is dedicated to the study and welfare of birds and their habitats, and to engaging the public in important environmental issues that affects birds and humans alike. VERY IMPORTANT Meeting afterwards.



GORGEOUS HAWKS WE THRILL TO SEE



Osprey: (above) Sometimes called "Fishing Hawk," these birds look out hungrily before setting out to hunt.

Mississippi Kite: (Below) A graceful, buoyant, deliberate flyer, this bird is related to the Swallow-Tailed Kite.

Is there a birder in the U.S. who doesn't love to watch an Osprey or Mississippi Kite on the wing?

Osprey are unique among North American raptors for their diet of live fish and ability to dive into water to catch them. Osprey are common sights for lowcountry residents as the birds patrol waterways and stand on their huge stick nests, white heads gleaming. These large, rangy hawks do well around humans, and their numbers have rebounded since the ban on DDT.

The Mississippi Kite uses its square-tipped tail, tilting this way and that, as it directs its course with caution. Frequently, the bird hangs in the air as if suspended, or soars as if it had nothing more important to do than enjoy the feeling of freedom. But, in a second, it may stoop at a White-necked Raven or other unwary prey...often grasshoppers, cicadas, dragonflies and other large insects.

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STRIKINGLY BEAUTIFUL RED-SHOULDERED HAWK IN WINTER (from allaboutbirds.org)

With fewer leaves on the trees, winter is a time when raptors become more conspicuous. Fewer daylight hours and lower prey abundance mean hawks and falcons are out hunting more intensively. When you see a raptor -- in a tree, atop a pole -- try to identify it. Don't mistake this hawk for a Red-Tailed Hawk, which is more stocky and larger than this species. Red-shouldered hawks like to hunt close to woods, and have a distinct checkerboard pattern on their folded wings.



What is the smallest falcon in North America?



- a) American kestrel
- b) Merlin
- c) Aplomado falcon
- d) Gyrfalcon

What do you call a young falcon?



- a) Falconet
- b) Puffkin
- c) Eyas
- d) Puggle

October Bird Quiz
Answers to the **Oct. Quiz** appear on page 4.
The October quiz is brought to you through **BirdWire**, an e-newsletter sponsored by the publishers of **Bird Watcher's Digest**.

Why do many falcons have dark "mustache" markings under their eyes?



- a) To confuse prey
- b) To reduce glare
- c) To threaten rivals
- d) To look sophisticated

Which falcon species is a cavity nester?



- a) Gyrfalcon
- b) Prairie falcon
- c) American kestrel
- d) Falcons do not nest in tree cavities



FALCONS FACTS -- TAKE THE QUIZ !

-- Article by Kyle Carlsen, *Bird Watcher's Digest*

Who doesn't love a falcon? These powerful predators wow us with their agile flight and lightning speeds, the fighter jets of the bird world. Around 60 species exist worldwide, but only seven regularly occur in North America: the muscular gyrfalcon of the Arctic tundra; the prairie falcon of western grasslands; the widespread and increasingly urban peregrine falcon; the small but mighty merlin; the colorful American kestrel; the rare aplomado falcon of extreme southern Texas; and the crested caracara, that southern scavenger that is, believe it or not, a member of the falcon family.

The fact that peregrine falcons are now a familiar sight throughout much of North America is one of our greatest conservation success stories. These birds nearly went extinct by the 1960s due to DDT poisoning. Thanks to policy changes and cooperative conservation and restoration efforts, peregrines are now back on the rise, nesting on skyscrapers in many cities.

Take a few moments to learn more about North American falcons by taking our four-question quiz.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



October 7

SCHH Bird Club Meeting at 4 PM.

Business: *The Bird Club nominating committee will present its proposed 2016 slate of officers, after which nominations from the membership will be accepted. Voting for new Board members takes place at the November 4 meeting.*

Program: "The Petite Birds of Prey" The Avian Conservation Center and its Center for Birds of Prey. *Situated near Charleston, the Center is dedicated to the study and welfare of birds and their habitats, and to engaging the public in important environmental issues that affect birds and humans alike. The Center operates a professional avian medical clinic for injured birds of prey and some shorebird species, treating more than 500 injured birds each year. Visitors to the Center can enjoy a natural setting in which to observe many species of birds of prey.*



October 8 - 11

23rd Annual Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival. *Cape Charles, VA. Check out esbirdingfestival.com.*

October 17, 24, Nov. 7 **Birding 101 Class at 9:30 a.m.** *with Grant Greider, Education Chair, HHI Audubon. Coastal Discovery Museum. \$5 for non-members.*

October 20 - 25 **19th Annual Wings over Water Wildlife Festival.** *Outer Banks of North Carolina. Check out www.wingsoverwater.org*

*Answers to the Falcon Quiz on p. 3:
Smallest Kestrel is American Kestrel.
Mustache markings help reduce glare.
American Kestrel may nest in cavity.
Falcon juvenile in nest is called "Eyas."*

RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS IN OUR AREA

Thanks to Jack Colcolough's report in the September issue of *Ecobon* (HHI's Audubon Society newsletter), we know that some fall and winter migrant birds have already arrived here.



Fall migration brought 13 *Warbler species* here, including: Hooded, Worm-eating, Prothonotary, Cape May, Prairie and Yellow Warblers; Ovenbird, both Waterthrushes, American Redstart and Northern Parula.

Early winter shorebirds already on our beaches include: endangered Piping Plover, Marbled Godwit, American

Oystercatcher; Wilson's, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers; Ruddy Turnstone; Short-billed Dowitcher; Least, Western, and Semipalmated Sandpipers; and Sanderlings.

Even some rare bird species have been spotted: Yellow-headed Blackbird; Wilson's Phalarope; Black Tern; Gray Kingbird. Consult this issue of *Ecobon* for the birds' locations.

8 ACTIONS TO PROTECT THE BIRDS WHERE WE LIVE



Dave Davis, our SCHH Bird Club's vice president and also our program chairperson, wants us to consider how best to protect the birds where WE live.

1. Reduce or eliminate pesticide and herbicide use.

By using fewer chemicals in and around the home we can help keep birds, pets and ourselves healthy.



2. Cultivate native plants.

Native flora provides birds with food in the form of fruit and seeds, and is home to tasty invertebrates like bugs and spiders.

Our backyard birds vary by size, shape, color, food favorites, etc., but we are fairly sure about what they need -- protection from the elements, from predators, and from lack of understanding among some human friends. Spread the word regarding bird-friendly yards!

3. Identify the non-native invasive plants in your regions,

and work to remove them. Don't bring any new invasives into your backyard habitat! Invasive plants don't provide as much good food or habitat as natives do, and can threaten healthy ecosystems.



4. Attract hummingbirds with sugar water made by combining four parts hot water to one part white sugar, boiled for one to two minutes. Never use honey, artificial sweeteners, or food coloring. Clean

hummingbird feeders with a solution of one part white vinegar to four parts water once a week.

5. Make your windows visible to birds to prevent collisions. Put up screens, close drapes and blinds when you leave the house, or stick multiple decals on the glass (*decals need to be two to four inches apart to be effective*).

6. Let your yard get a little messy! Leave snags for nesting places and stack downed tree limbs to create a brush pile, which is a great source of cover for birds during bad weather.

7. Close your blinds at night and turn off lights you aren't using.

Some birds use constellations to guide them on their annual migrations, and bright light from windows and sky lights can disrupt their steering senses.

8. Create or protect water sources in your yard. Birds need water to drink and bathe in, just like we do. Be sure to keep birdbaths clean and change the water three times per week when mosquitoes are breeding.



SUN CITY EAGLE PAIR RETURN FROM "SUMMER VACATION"

Last spring we celebrated the fledging of Sun City's 2015 baby eagle, who was named "Skylar" by the HOP group -- Sun City eagle fans who watch their local eagles' nest (neighborhood near Stovell Road) where this adult pair has successfully raised eaglets. The good news is that this adult eagle pair returned from their summer migration, and on September 12 were observed sitting on a branch above their regular nest. That seems promising, doesn't it?

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IMPORTANT! CHECK OUT THESE REMINDERS!



*At our **SCHH Bird Club meeting on 10/7**, our nominating committee will present its proposed 2016 slate of officers, after which nominations from the membership will be accepted.*

Voting for new Board members takes place at our SCHH Bird Club November 4 meeting.

SCHH Bird Club wants you!

*Two teams within our Club need your help: **Blue Bird Trail** team, and **Purple Martin Trail** team.*

Heading up a team is a great way to make friends and help out two species of birds that do lots for us -- they beautify our world and eat lots of bugs! Yay!

Contact Noah Rosenstein for information (see upper left corner of page).



MANY, VARIED CLUB ACTIVITIES APPEAL TO FOLKS

- Monitoring our more than 100 Bluebird nesting boxes
- Monitoring our 15 Purple Martin Condos
- Participating in Okatie-Sun City Christmas Bird Count
- Leading and/or Participating in Birding Trips, local and overnight, using our Club Birding Scope and walkie-talkies
- Participating in Seasonal "Birdfests"
- Conducting or participating in periodic Backyard Birding events

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