

# *Bird Walk Newsletter* 9.3.2017

*Walk Conducted by Perry Nugent*

*Newsletter Written by Jayne J. Matney*

---

*Photo below by Ray Swagerty*



## Carolina Wren

*Thryothorus ludovicianus*

*South Carolina was named after King Charles II due to the Latin form of Charles, Carolus. Over the course of the years, the mockingbird was named our state bird, but was replaced by the Carolina Wren in 1948. The Carolina Wren is a stocky, little bird known for its reddish-brown top half and its soft brown underside, a light chin and throat, a white streak that looks as though it is a white eyebrow, and a*

*banned tail that often sticks up. The bill is dark and has a downward curve. The males and females look alike. The vocalization is usually described as a “teakettle, teakettle, tea kettle” call. The song is a more elaborate, musical stream of notes. These birds are also known for their feisty temperament but tend to be very shy of humans. The most similar species to this bird is the Bewick’s Wren, but the Bewick’s Wren has a longer tail and its range stretches further west to California. The Carolina Wren is found from mid-US to the eastern coast. They are not migrators; they are permanent residences of their range. Because they are sensitive to cold weather, the population range for the Carolina Wren expands northward during years which have milder winters, then shrink back down during years of harsher winters. They take up residence in areas which are providing thickets, shrubbery, and vines. They love mangled branches, unkempt wooded areas, and swamp land. They also take advantage of uninhabited houses, farmland that is overgrown, and backyards that provide plenty of brush. They dart and creep around low in the bushes and ground to capture food such as insects and spiders. Some of their favorites include caterpillars, beetles, moths, crickets, and leafhoppers.*



*Periodically, they will also eat lizards and small frogs, or berries and seeds. Carolina Wrens can be appreciated for their instinct for togetherness. They stay in the same area for life, they mate for life, forage for food together, sing duets in which the male does the actual singing and the female joins in with her quick “chips” or “chatter” along the way, and build nests together. They usually lay 2 to 3 broods a year depending upon whether they are on the northern part of their range or southern most part of the range. They generally build their nests lower than 10 feet in dense shrubbery which is highly shaded and more camouflaged. Building their nest of pine needles, dead leaves, hair, feathers, dead grasses, and pieces of bark, both the male and female bond and prepare for eggs. The nest becomes a domed cup structure with a hole in the side for entering or*

*exiting. The female lines the inner nest and incubates alone, but the males have been known to feed her during this stint. The eggs are white with brown blotches. The number of eggs ranges from 4-8 but usually 5 or 6 will be found in the nest. Once the little ones “hatch out”, both parents are diligent with the feeding duties.*

*The pictures on this page are by Guenter Weber. Notice the fuzzy feathers on top of the head on first photo of young wren.*



*Partners in Flight estimate the population to be around 14 million with 89% of those living within the United States. The population is stable and possibly increasing. The North American Breeding Bird Survey states that they have been increasing since 1966. The expansion further north is not only an indication of milder weather but also forest fragmentation and reforestation efforts because of their love for tangled brush and vines that are found in these settings. In addition, the popularity of bird feeders enable these birds to prosper better in winter.*

*Photo below by Ed Blich*



**Fun Facts:**

- 1. The brown blotches found on the eggs are more highly concentrated on the larger end of the egg.***
- 2. Carolina Wrens are notorious for building nests in our garages, out buildings, flowerpots, mailboxes, clothes pin bags, and even old coat pockets or boots on the porch!***
- 3. Constant singers and chatters, a captive Carolina Wren sang approximately 3000 times in one day!***
- 4. The oldest recorded Carolina Wren was at least 7 years and 8 months old.***
- 5. When Carolina Wrens build their nests they often build on a porch leading into the opening.***

***Information gathered for this article came from “Carolina Wren”, All About Birds, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Kaufman, Kenn, “Carolina Wren”, Audubon Field Guide; “Carolina Wren”, Bird Watcher’s Digest; [www.wild-bird-watching.com/Carolina-Wren](http://www.wild-bird-watching.com/Carolina-Wren) .***



*Pileated Woodpecker*  
*Photo by Guenter Weber*

*Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, was a warm but low humidity day for the plantation in August. Two participants went on the walk and they found 41 species for the count. The pair, lead this week by Ray Swagerty, started the walk seeing a Pine Warbler in the parking lot. Ravenswood and the cabin areas were top producers on this day. At Ravenswood, Wood Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Anhinga, Common Moorhen, and Summer Tanager were in attendance along with a Black-and-white Warbler near the covered bridge. A Northern Flicker was a surprise since they usually don't show up until early fall. The cabin area and adjacent woods revealed Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great-crested Flycatcher, and Eastern Bluebirds. In addition, a half dozen of the Red-eyed Vireo were seen in a magnolia tree in front of the cabins going after the red berries being produced this time of year. One Red-shouldered Hawk was counted from the cabin area as well. The White-eyed Vireo were seen everywhere on the walk. Plenty of Carolina Chickadee were spotted but only a couple of Tufted Titmouse were in tow. This was a surprise in that these two birds are usually seen in proximity to each other. A good number of Carolina Wren were spotted. A couple of Barn Swallows were located while walking over the boardwalk in the Audubon Swamp. The Red-winged Blackbirds were seen in the Audubon Swamp but not found in their typical spot in the large impoundment. Also near the Audubon Swamp area and in the wooded areas were Pine Warblers. In the woods along the walk were Yellow-bellied Cuckoo, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and the Northern Parula. Waterthrush were observed splashing and pumping their tails in standing water puddles located in the woods. A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers were heard conversing in the woods along the trail as well. In the large impoundment area and off of the dike system, many birds were found including: Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Common Moorhen, Little Blue Heron, a Yellow-bellied Cuckoo, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Mockingbird, and Yellow Warbler. Both the Mississippi Kite and the Snowy Egret were seen on the river side of the river dike. In addition, a mature pair and a juvenile eagle were seen fishing in the Ashley River. One of them showed off its skills and captured a fish while the bird watchers looked on. Two of the three Red-shouldered Hawks seen on this day were observed from the river dike as well. To finish off the count: Black Vultures, Turkey Vultures, Laughing Gulls, Mourning Doves, Blue Jay, American Crow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, and Northern Cardinal.*