

ANROSP – Outstanding Educational Materials Application

Submitted for: 2018 ANROSP Conference

Submitted by: Erin Hall, Master Naturalist Program Coordinator, Central Carolinas Master Naturalist (CCMN) Program*

*The CCMN Program is administered by the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department (MCPR).

Provide specific reasons/ examples of how the educational materials meet each applicable criterion for the category. Provide copies of the materials where appropriate or links to online materials.

a) Content: Is the content useful to the target audience, correct, well organized and presented in a logical flow? Is the target audience identified?

Per the *Birds of the Central Carolinas*, the target audience is "...anyone who wants to discover the fascinating history of birds in the region and to understand their status and distribution today." The content of *Birds of the Central Carolinas* attracts various audiences for potentially different reasons. The general public may be most interested in the type of bird species found in the region while ornithologists may be most interested in the historical content and current scientific data for research purposes. There is a wide array of target audiences in between the two of these. The *Birds of the Central Carolinas* will be utilized as a supplemental resource for Master Naturalist participants, who vary in knowledge from novice to expert. In addition, even though the book is based on information from the Carolina Piedmont, many of the bird species discussed in the book can be found in various states and countries; therefore, the target audience extends beyond just the Central Carolinas region.

The author, Don Seriff, consulted an extensive and diverse set of sources to obtain the records and information he used. Sources for bird species data and information as well as credits for photographs are notated throughout the book and in the Notes and Bibliography sections. All information was thoroughly vetted, researched, and triple-checked across multiple sources.

Data, maps, and historical content in *Birds of the Central Carolinas* are written and presented in a way that is easy for both novice or expert birders to understand. The beginning of the book includes a Table of Contents, Foreword, Preface, Introduction, Breeding Bird Atlas explanation, Species Accounts explanation, and is then followed by the individual bird species accounts listed in taxonomic order. Bird species are listed in the Table of Contents but can also be found by using the Quick Index at the back of the book. After the bird species section are additional species lists (Supplementary, Hypothetical, and Exotic Lists) followed by the Appendices and Credits. The Appendices contains information that is easily accessible and situated in its own section. It contains additional maps, documentation levels, charts, diagrams, notes, and the bibliography.

b) Editing: Is the text (or script for a sound track) written with a vocabulary, grammar and sentence length that the target audience will easily understand? Are spelling and punctuation correct?

The author, Don Seriff, has been actively involved with bird research activities for 30 years and has received numerous awards related to his research and effort during that time. He has written numerous scientific articles, reports, etc. over the years and is also the author of the *Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas*. From 2013 – 2017, he served as the editor of *The Chat*, the ornithological journal of the Carolinas, published since 1937. Three experienced proof readers assisted with review and editing.

The following are two examples of excerpts from the book:

- “The Wood Duck is simply spectacular. It is a treasure that can only be found on the quiet backwaters of our creeks, lakes, ponds, and forested wetlands. The drake has often been called the most beautiful duck in North America. Henry David Thoreau once described it as a ‘glowing gem’ floating upon the water.”
- “The Herring Gull is a widespread gull that breeds throughout the northern United States and Canada. The southern extent of its breeding range is now the coast of North Carolina. This breeding range expansion was first discovered on Gull Island in the Pamlico Sound in 1962, and the resident population has been growing since.”

c) Graphics: Are graphics (e.g., drawings, charts, photographs) used where appropriate, designed and labeled so their meaning is clear and of high visual quality?

Birds of the Central Carolinas contains numerous photographs and graphics that supplement the written material. Most noticeably, each bird species account contains a seasonal abundance graph, quick reference icons, original illustration, Breeding Bird Atlas Map (if the bird was recorded breeding in Mecklenburg County), and if available and of publishing quality, a photograph of the bird taken in the region. The graphs and icons are clear, and a key is provided both in the introduction and at the back of the book in the Quick Index page for easy access. All visuals were designed in the Adobe Creative Suite platform to ensure high visual quality. The illustrations were made by Leigh Anne Carter, a scientific illustrator, and photographs were taken by multiple local photographers that are experienced in bird photography.

d) Design: Is the overall layout and design appealing and useful to the audience? Are there layout or design flaws?

Birds of the Central Carolinas has a very appealing and modern design, but most importantly, the information is easily accessible due to its organization being laid out in a logical and traditional way. Readers can find what they need quickly from the Table of Contents or Quick Index, and care was taken to make the graphics fit into the text and not interrupt the reading process. The layout style is consistent throughout the publication, but also flexible. For example, in the species

accounts section some birds needed at least three pages to contain their history, while other birds with not as much data only took up half a page. The layout juggles these requirements nicely, and all the information that needs to be related to the audience is presented.

e) Sound track (use if relevant): Is the sound track clear, and does it include appropriate natural sounds from the environment? Are the speakers articulate?

Not applicable

f) Evaluation: Are there evaluation plans or results? Are they positive, and have they been used to improve the material?

As of April 2018 (first printing and distribution), *Birds of the Central Carolinas* has received multiple positive reviews, a feature in the *Charlotte Observer* newspaper and website, letters from college professors, etc. Positive feedback was received from the 2018 CCMN Basic Training Course participants who were some of the first individuals from the general public to review the publication.

- Review by Scott Anderson of NC Partners in Flight:
http://ncpif.ncbirdingtrail.org/2018/06/11/birds-of-the-central-carolinas/?utm_source=NC+Partners+in+Flight&utm_campaign=52dca55aca-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8f2184a1df-52dca55aca-198596585
- *Charlotte Observer* article and interview:
<https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article208684944.html>
- Reviews submitted to Mecklenburg Audubon Society's website:
https://meckbirds.org/conservation/BOCC_Reviews.pdf

As of August 1, 2018, almost half (495) of the 1,000 books printed have already been distributed or purchased. *Birds of the Central Carolinas* can be purchased through the Mecklenburg Audubon Society (www.meckbirds.org) as well as several independent bookstores and bird/nature specific businesses. The book is also being distributed to schools and libraries as an educational resource.

g) Title of educational material: Please include web addresses for web page(s) and full citation for referenced journal articles.

Title: *Birds of the Central Carolinas* – ISBN978-0-692-05339-7

- Written by Donald W. Seriff
- Illustrations by Leigh Anne Carter

Birds of the Central Carolinas Overview:

Birds of the Central Carolinas is a 600-page publication that provides a detailed analysis of the status, distribution, and historical context of bird species observed in the Central Carolinas, an area that lies at the core of the Carolina Piedmont and at the center of the Piedmont Ecoregion – as mapped by The Nature Conservancy. It includes full accounts of 312 bird species and partial accounts of another 60 species. Vastly more informative than a field guide, this work presents historical material previously unpublished in any book and deftly incorporates firsthand accounts of bird observations over the past 150 years. *Birds of the Central Carolinas* incorporates the complete results of the *Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas, 2011 – 2015* (BBA) – the first county-level atlas project in the Carolinas. Over 250 people, including birders, photographers, Central Carolinas Master Naturalists, and volunteers contributed more than 3,000 hours of their time on the BBA and *Birds of the Central Carolinas*. This publication establishes a benchmark for birders to build upon throughout the remainder of the twenty-first century.

Author Bio: Don Seriff, conservation biologist and author of *Birds of the Central Carolinas*, is a Natural Resources Coordinator with MCPR. He has been a CCMN Instructor and Member since 2012, when the CCMN Program was initiated. During Don’s tenure with MCPR, he established the Conservation Science program and managed this award-winning program for more than a decade. He has been actively involved in bird research activities for 30 years.

Illustrator Bio: Leigh Anne Carter, naturalist and illustrator of *Birds of the Central Carolinas*, is a Natural Resources Assistant with MCPR. She has been a CCMN Member since 2014. Leigh Anne was an Artist-in-Residence at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and interned as a science illustrator with the National Museum of Natural History. Her contribution to this project included research assistance, illustration, design, and field work.

Supporting Partners:

- *Birds of the Central Carolinas*
 - Mecklenburg Audubon Society
 - Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department
 - Partners for Parks
- Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas, 2011 – 2015
 - Mecklenburg Audubon Society
 - Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department
 - United States Geological Survey
 - Additional financial support provided by:
 - Partners for Parks
 - Carolina Bird Club
 - Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs (ANROSP)