

Whistler

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County Newsletter

Winter 2006

Printed on recycled paper 

UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 5 Board Meeting, Arbor Acres 7:00 p.m.
- December 9 2nd Saturday Birdwalk and cleanup, Miller Park 9:00 a.m.
- December 30 **Christmas Bird Count (SEE BELOW FOR DETAILS)**
- January 2 Board Meeting, Arbor Acres 7:00 p.m.
- January 12-15 **Winter Field Trip, Morehead City and Beaufort (SEE BELOW FOR DETAILS)**
- January 13 2nd Saturday Birdwalk, Salem Lake 9:00 a.m.
- January 23 Chapter Meeting, Sciworks Refreshments 7:00 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m.
Chris North: Teeming with Wildlife
- February 6 Board Meeting, Arbor Acres 7:00 p.m.
- February 10 2nd Saturday Birdwalk, Washington Park 9:00 a.m.
- February 16-19 **Greater Backyard Bird Count (SEE PAGE 5 FOR DETAILS)**
- February 27 Chapter Meeting, Sciworks Refreshments 7:00 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m.
Christopher Moorman, Associate Professor, Dept. of Forestry and Environmental Resources, NC State University: Maintaining Bird Habitat along Urban Greenways

WINTER FIELD TRIP

ASFC is doing something different for our next winter birding trip. From January 12 through January 15, 2007 we will be birding in the Morehead City/Beaufort area. January 12 is a travel day, with birding on the 13th and 14th. We will return on January 15 after a little early birding.

Our principal guide for birding in the area will be John Fussell's book, [A Birder's Guide to Coastal North Carolina](#). Among the main spots we will visit are the Rachael Carson Preserve and possibly Bird Shoals, located on an island off Beaufort that is accessible by ferry. Since we have to reserve the ferry a day ahead of time this would be a scheduled event. Other sites may include Calico Creek and the nearby Treatment Plant in Morehead City, Fort Macon State Park, and a trail near the Aquarium in Morehead City. Near Beaufort we will check out Howland Rock, North River Marsh, and the Carteret Wildlife Club's Observation Platform north of the marsh. There are many other sites listed in Fussell's book and we might add to the above list.

(continued on page 2)

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The annual Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 30, 2006. Early birders get out before dawn to see which owls are prowling -- the more ears the better! Most other teams gather between 8 and 9 a.m., and count until dusk. This is a great way to meet new people, learn more birds and contribute to citizen science. Last year, forty-two counters spotted seventy-eight species. But we never know what we might find! We always end the count by gathering at the "after count dinner" to tally the results.

Plan to join us - email Linda Davis at davisl@mindspring.com or call (336) 924-1751 to sign up. Final details and team assignments will be sent to all participants prior to the count. While we're serious about the count, we have a great time together - it's informal and fun for families!

CONSERVATION CORNER

There is some good news on the conservation horizon. A federal law that went into effect in August creates new tax incentives for conservation agreement donations made in 2006 and 2007. To learn more about these incentives you may visit the Land Trust Alliance website at www.lta.org.

Close to home, we have a remarkable conservation easement story in the Laurelmore property that sprawls over 6,000 acres in both Watauga and Wilkes counties. I think many of us reacted with horror when we first read that this huge tract was to be developed, but something wonderful happened. It turned out that Ginn Clubs and Resorts is truly committed to developing the property "to the highest possible standards with a degree of attention being paid to environmental protection that . . . is nearly unique," according to an article written by James Coman, director of the Blue Ridge Rural Land Trust that accepted the easement. The current issue of *The Chestnut Burr*, the newsletter of BRRLT, features the Laurelmore property in celebration of the planned conservation easement of up to 2,750 acres over the next few years. Another article by Miles Tager relates that the environmental consultant for the Laurelmore property, John Vilas "got a call that a Ginn-employed logger had observed a small stream or seep that wasn't on his map; the man had stopped all activity around the area to call the environmental consultant and ask him to take a look. I asked him to repeat that story because I wasn't sure I could have heard him correctly; construction had stopped so that he could determine whether it was safe environmentally for them to continue?"

For my part, I vote to give the Ginn folks the "esse quam videre" award. That is our state motto, and translates "to be rather than to seem." Not only have they turned out to be sincere in their efforts to develop in an environmentally sensitive manner, but they have already influenced other developers and landowners in the area, who have contacted the BRRLT for information on conservation easements.

It is my understanding that NC Audubon and the Department of Biology at Appalachian State will also play a role in this remarkable project by helping with data gathering on threatened and endangered species that may be present on the property. What a great example of win-win collaboration!

There are a couple of other things I'd like to mention related to NC Audubon. I shared the following web link through forsythbirds, but for those of you who are not on that listserve, I think you'll enjoy a visit to www.booneweather.com. Click on "Life Outdoors" and then "Birding". The Birding column is written by Curtis Smalling of NC Audubon, who lives in the Boone area. In addition to Curtis' excellent articles, the website is chock full of interesting information. Enjoy!

And where did I learn about the booneweather link? From the NC Audubon listserve, of course! You may also want to consider subscribing to it if you have not already done so. The e-address is LISTSERV@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG.

In the text area, type SUBSCRIBE NC-NEWS@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG. You will not receive many e-mails - maybe an average of one per week - but they are unfailingly informative and insightful, as you would expect from Director Chris Canfield. He closely monitors the Navy OLF issue, for instance, and sent a link to a great summary article recently published in Audubon Magazine: <http://magazine.audubon.org/incite/incite0611.html>. He also sent a link to a compelling op/ed he wrote for the Raleigh News & Observer on the alarming underfunding of our national wildlife refuges: (<http://www.newsobserver.com/559/story/507506.html>) The Charlotte Observer picked up on Chris' piece and wrote a sister editorial advocating increased funding for the National Wildlife Refuge System. So, raising an informed, articulate and passionate voice can create positive synergy and move us forward in the quest to preserve our natural heritage.

Each of us can play a part, be it large or small. Happy holidays to all!

Ann Robertson



(Winter Field Trip, continued from page 1)

There are a number of options for accommodations in the area but it might be best to have everyone together in one place, at the Inlet Inn in Beaufort. The hotel is right on the waterfront and if we book ten rooms, they will give us a ten percent discount on each room. See <http://www.inlet-inn.com> for further information. Call 800-554-5466 for reservations, and be sure to tell them you are with Forsyth Audubon. If we don't get commitments for ten rooms by the end of December, then we'll make information available on other options.

Please let Don Adamick (at dadamick@bellsouth.net) know: 1) if you plan on participating in the trip, 2) how many will be in your party, and 3) if you plan to stay at the Inlet Inn.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS & NAVY REACH SETTLEMENT ON AIR SPACE NEAR PROPOSED OUTLYING LANDING FIELD

The U.S. Navy and environmental groups represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center have reached a settlement on proposed Military Operations Areas (MOAs) to be located in Eastern North Carolina that would impact wildlife in and around four National Wildlife Refuges. The Southern Environmental Law Center represented the National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife and the North Carolina Wildlife Association in the settlement.

As part of the settlement, the Navy agreed to withdraw its plans for a MOA that would have overlain parts of Mattamuskeet, Swan Quarter, Pocosin Lakes and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges. The environmental groups agreed to not oppose a proposed MOA over the Core Banks. The compromise will allow the Navy to access existing military airspace over Pamlico Sound from the Atlantic Ocean but will not result in expansive new military airspace that would impact the hundreds of thousands of waterfowl that winter in and around the wildlife refuges.

“This settlement will allow the Navy to access existing military airspace for its important training while avoiding an unnecessary and significant expansion of military airspace over some of the nation’s most important wildlife refuges,” said Chris Canfield, Executive Director of Audubon North Carolina.

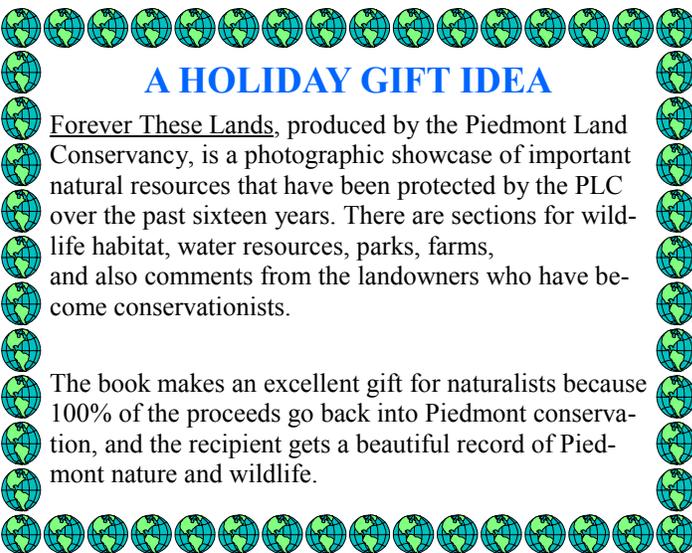
In July, 2005, U.S. District Court Judge Terrence Boyle ruled that the Navy had failed to properly assess the environmental impacts of the proposed MOAs and had erred in its conclusion that the MOAs had no significant impact on waterfowl or wildlife refuges. Boyle ruled that should the Navy proceed with plans for a MOA, it would need to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and prepare an environmental impact statement. “This is the first of two essential steps by the Navy needed to protect the wildlife and refuges of eastern North Carolina. The second step is to withdraw or find a new location for the proposed outlying landing field,” said Derb Carter, Senior Attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center.

The new MOAs were proposed by the U.S. Marine Corps, a division of the U.S. Navy. If established, the Mattamuskeet MOA would allow approximately 7.5 hours per day of combat training and maneuvers as low as to 3000 feet above ground level. The MOAs were proposed at the same time as the US Navy’s proposed Outlying Landing Field, and the two proposals would impact the same natural areas and wildlife.

If approved by the Federal Aviation Administration, the Navy will be allowed to fly approximately six flights per day at low altitudes and high speeds in the airspace across the Core Banks as a result of the settlement. The Navy may in the future propose a new or modified MOA in the region but must fully comply with NEPA and the court’s order.

HAWK WATCH

Several ASFC members carried out a hawk watch between September 15 and 30 at Pilot Mountain, in honor of Ramona Snaveley. Sightings included American Eagles, Turkey and Black Vultures, Peregrine Falcons, Ospreys, American Kestrels, and Northern Harriers, along with a variety of hawks (Broad Winged, Red Tailed, Red Shouldered, Cooper’s and Sharp-Shinned). The highlight of the hawk watch was a huge kettle of Broad Winged Hawks, totaling 1889, seen on September 26.



A HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA

Forever These Lands, produced by the Piedmont Land Conservancy, is a photographic showcase of important natural resources that have been protected by the PLC over the past sixteen years. There are sections for wildlife habitat, water resources, parks, farms, and also comments from the landowners who have become conservationists.

The book makes an excellent gift for naturalists because 100% of the proceeds go back into Piedmont conservation, and the recipient gets a beautiful record of Piedmont nature and wildlife.

COUNTING SHOREBIRDS AT ARCHIE ELLEDGE

From August through October, the Audubon Society’s Forsyth Chapter took part in the International Shorebird Surveys conducted by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences in Massachusetts. The mudflats at the Archie Elledge Wastewater Treatment Plant were host to at least nine species, including the first Sanderlings reported here in many years. Killdeer were the most numerous species, followed by Least Sandpipers and Lesser Yellowlegs. Other species were Semipalmated Plover and Solitary, Spotted, Pectoral, Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers.

Chapter counters included Phil Dickinson, Ferenc Domoki, Hop Hopkins, Royce Hough, Jim Martin, Paul Powers and Pat Stewart. Thanks to everyone who took part. The Surveys have tracked trends since 1974 with about 1300 reports added each year. Data are used by conservation and wildlife management initiatives and help formulate practices by various federal agencies.

Phil Dickinson

ENJOYING NATURE AT BLUFF MOUNTAIN AND NEW RIVER

On September 23, fourteen of us gathered in West Jefferson for the trip up Bluff Mountain with Doug Munroe as our guide. We soon learned the purpose of the dump truck, as thirteen of us drew long straws and piled in the truck bed for the long climb.

After a wonderful wildflower walk, we were greeted at the Perkins Rock overlook with high winds, rain and hail (or was it sleet?). Weather doesn't last long in the mountains, and a hike to a second overlook rewarded us with sunshine and magnificent views. After a picnic lunch, we enjoyed more wildflowers, examined bobcat scat and arrived at a marvelous fen of grasses and wildflowers in the middle of the forest. At fen's edge, we encountered a mixed flock of vireos, orioles and warblers. Returning to Perkins Rock, we warmed in the sun as we peered into the valley below and watched about a half dozen Broad-Winged Hawks.

We were awed by the mountain ash and variety of wildflowers and plants, including purple gentians, ginseng, doll's eye and blue cohosh, obedient plant, monkshood, Indian cucumber root, wood betony and wintergreen. The thrilling trip up was mild compared to the trip down, but we survived to tell the tale. We all agreed that Bluff Mountain is a special place for which we owe much to the Nature Conservancy.

On Sunday, Phil and Mary Dickinson, Lois Schneider, Gene Schepker and Myrna Harris stayed over to bird the U.S. 221 access area of New River State Park. Along a stream on the way, we found Common Yellowthroats and several Phoebes. At the park, Lois spied a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in a sycamore, and we stirred up a Ruffed Grouse along the Hickory Trail. We also counted a family of Indigo Buntings, all four local vireos, Magnolia Warblers and a Red-tailed Hawk among our twenty-five or so species.

Phil Dickinson

COUNTS FOR NEW RIVER IBA

Here are more opportunities to bird our adopted New River Corridor IBA. On Saturday December 16, a Christmas count will include the Allegheny Access section that we visited last May. Contact Harrol Blevins at kestrel@valink.com if you are interested. A Mt. Jefferson Count on December 14 includes the Waggoner Rd. area of New River State Park. Contact Peter Zwadyk at mountainlazy@yahoo.com. Members interested in carpooling should also let me know at 659-2464 or pdickins@triad.rr.com.

Phil Dickinson

First let me say a great big thank you to all of you for your efforts in 2006 on our Adopt an IBA program in North Carolina. I have received most of the data from this year's efforts.

I hope the Adopt an IBA experience has been a good one for your chapter this year, and I hope that you will again consider participating. We have some exciting work going on out there, that just wouldn't be happening without you!

Let me share a couple of things with you on what happens to your data. We are currently entering this year's data into a centralized database here in North Carolina and those point counts, transects, and area search data are being shared with several places. First and foremost, Audubon North Carolina uses the data to help us determine if a site is eligible for IBA designation. We also use the data to help us prioritize our IBAs for direct conservation action.

We also share our data with the Southeast GAP office and NC GAP offices. If you visit the NC GAP website and pull up models of distribution for species across North Carolina, your data is helping to generate those maps. We have recently been using those maps to help plan for conservation at a regional scale in the Albemarle region. Other groups are at work using the data and maps in the Sandhills, Uwharries, and other spots across the state.

We will also be loading your data up to the national Audubon Society IBA database that allows scientists to see how species are using our IBAs and where national and globally significant sites might be.

We also share specific species data with the NC Natural Heritage Database, Wildlife Resources Commission, and many others. So your data doesn't just sit in a desk drawer somewhere. Researchers, conservationists, and GIS modelers are using that data to move bird and habitat conservation forward in North Carolina!

Thanks again for your help.

Curtis Smalling
Audubon North Carolina
esmalling@audubon.org





NC PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

Here are some dates to hold on your calendar for upcoming NC Partners in Flight meetings:

March 27, 2007 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Blue Jay Point County Park, Wake County, NC

November 7, 2007 1 p.m.- 5 p.m.

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Columbia, NC

The Spring 2008 meeting will likely be in the Piedmont region and the Fall 2008 meeting in the Southern Blue Ridge area of NC.

Mark Johns

NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Partners in Flight Biologist

johnsme@mindspring.com

<http://faculty.ncwc.edu/mbrooks/pif/>



Work on the North Carolina Birding Trail, which began in October of 2003, is ongoing, with nominations for the coastal plain region now complete (a pdf listing for this area may be found at the web site below). Nominations for the piedmont region (between I-77 and I-95) began on October 1. For more information about the NC Birding Trail, and to nominate a birding site, see

<http://www.ncbirdingtrail.org>

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all levels in counting birds and reporting their results to create a mid-winter snapshot of the numbers, kinds, and distribution of birds across the continent. Participants count birds for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period and tally the highest number of birds of each species that they see at any one time. At the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, they fill out an online checklist to submit their counts. As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from the eight previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the GBBC online photo gallery. After the count, scientists analyze the results and post summaries highlighting the year's trends and findings.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited. This year, the count will be held between February 16-19. And best of all, participation is absolutely free! Last year, a total of 189 species and 203,903 birds were reported for the state of North Carolina (with sixty-eight species reported in Winston-Salem alone).

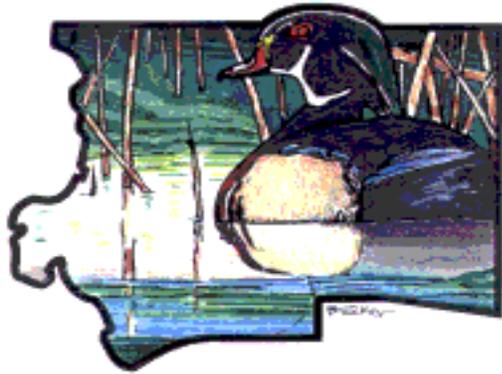
For more information about this program, see:

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>



Our Mission

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems—focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and North Carolina’s biological diversity



Visit us on the web at www.forsythaudubon.org

Audubon Society of
Forsyth County
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The Audubon Society of Forsyth County

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MEMBERSHIP

For membership information, please contact Jeremy Reiskind at 727-0734. If you don't wish to join the National Audubon Society, but would like to subscribe to our newsletter, send \$15.00 (make your check payable to ASFC) to: **Jeremy Reiskind, 385 Park Blvd., Winston Salem, NC 27127**
Please include your name, address and zip code.

NOTEWORTHY SIGHTINGS

Green Winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, Rusty Blackbirds and American Pipit were seen at Archie Elledge. Elsewhere, recent sightings include White Crowned Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Palm Warblers, Red Winged Blackbirds, Blue Headed Vireos, Winter Wrens, Sapsuckers, and in a sure sign of the coming of fall and winter — Juncos and Cedar Waxwings.

Please contact Linda Davis with any noteworthy sightings (davisl@mindspring.com)

