

Whistler

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County Newsletter

August-September 2011

Printed on recycled paper



UPCOMING EVENTS

August 2, 7:00 pm	Board Meeting — Arbor Acres Club House
August 13, 8:00 am	Second Saturday bird walk – Archie Elledge Water Treatment Plant (Leader: Gene Schepker)
September 6, 7:00 pm	Board Meeting — Arbor Acres Club House
September 10, 8:00 am	Second Saturday bird walk — to be announced
September 11-30	Hawk Watch, Pilot Mountain State Park (see below)
September 15, 7:15 pm	Swift Watch (location to be announced)
September 17	Hawk Migration Public Education Day at Pilot Mountain State Park, Little Pinnacle
September 27, 7:00 pm	Chapter Meeting — Bethabara Park Visitor Center (see page 5) Betsy Towns, “ Hovering Hummingbirds in Nineteenth Century Art and Science”

SEPTEMBER SWIFTS

September will be here soon, and that means thousands of Chimney Swifts will be moving through our area on their way to South America. Swifts have been here since April, but each fall birds from far to our north move through in large flocks and find communal roosts in large chimneys. Several thousand can use a single chimney at one of our older schools, churches or industrial sites. It is quite a sight to see these birds swarm around a chimney at dusk and then head down the chimney in a matter of minutes.

We will hold our annual Swift Watch on September 15, 7:15 to 8:00 at a location to be announced. Join us for a fun evening and bring the kids. In past years, the swifts have used several downtown sites, including a warehouse on 4th Street, the old court house, the Millenium Center and Centenary Methodist Church. Last year, there also was a very large roost at Northwest Middle School. Other places to look for migrating swifts include Kernersville, Sherwood, Speas, Vienna, Griffith and Lewisville Elementary Schools and the Old Clemmons School. To learn more about swift migration, go to www.chimneyswifts.org.

PILOT MOUNTAIN HAWK WATCH

Soon the hawks will be flying by Pilot Mountain on their way to Central and South America. Peak time for hawk watching at Little Pinnacle is the third week of September. That is when thousands of Broad-winged Hawks will be kettling up and riding the thermals along the Appalachian Ridge. It also is a great chance to see about a dozen other species of raptor, including Osprey, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle.

Planned dates for this year’s watch are September 11-30. We collect migration data and submit it to the Hawk Migration Association of North America, which keeps track of raptor numbers from Canada to Veracruz, Mexico. We need volunteers to count hawks and help us collect data. Contact me at 659-2464, pdickins@triad.rr.com. You are welcome regardless of experience level. It is a great chance to learn about these birds and to improve your identification skills.

IMPROVING WILDLIFE HABITAT AT TANGLEWOOD PARK

One of Forsyth Audubon's favorite birding spots is a part of Tanglewood Park that includes the road to the BMX course, the bottomland hardwood forest it borders, a wetland and a 10 acre grassy area called the Meadowlark Sanctuary. The designation as Meadowlark Sanctuary was apparently instigated by Forsyth Audubon many years ago, but unfortunately it has never lived up to the name; meadowlarks are seen there only rarely and certainly do not breed there. The area has been maintained as an often-mowed plot of Bermuda grass, which is great for golfing, but a virtual biological desert.

In early 2010, we approached the park with an offer to bring in a grasslands management expert to see if changes in management of the area could improve its usefulness to native wildlife. John Isenhour, Technical Assistance Biologist with NC Wildlife Resources Commission is an expert on native warm season grasses. He toured the area with me and Tanglewood Maintenance Supervisor Chris Weavil. John followed up with a plan to convert the Bermuda grass to native warm season grasses, Chris provided me with the details of the park's existing maintenance protocols, and I analyzed the differences between what the park was doing and what would be done if John's plan were implemented.

Carol Gearhart, Cindy Thompson and I met with Chris, Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Director Mark Serosky, Tanglewood Environmental Education Director Phyllis Smith and Media Coordinator Kelli Reich and were able to show them that the change to a more environmentally sustainable approach would actually save the park resources in staff hours and equipment upkeep. Park managers embraced John's plan and the conversion to native warm season grasses is underway.

There are three sections of the 10 acre grassy area. Two of them will be converted to native warm season grasses, while the third will continue to be managed as overflow parking for BMX course events. Conversion of Areas 1 and 2 will be accomplished through a series of actions that began with a controlled burn of Area 2 followed by herbicide applications to eradicate any remaining Bermuda grass and other non-native plants. Once the non-naïve plants have been killed the area will be seeded with a mixture of native warm season grasses and native forbs (native herbaceous broadleaf plants including wildflowers). The same process will be applied to Area 1.

Long-term management of this area will require semi-annual controlled burns of Areas 1 and 2 on a rotating basis.

It will take at least a couple of years to put this plan fully in place. In the long run, we can't be certain that Meadowlarks will nest in this habitat. But we can be certain that it will be much more natural and have far greater biological diversity that includes a broader variety of nesting birds, butterflies and other wildlife and that it will be an even better place for Forsyth Audubon members to enjoy.

For details on the conversion and management plan, see <http://www.forsythaudubon.org/pdf/Tanglewood%20Plan.PDF>

Ron Morris

FORSYTH AUDUBON HELPS WITH GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER SURVEYS

In May, Ron Morris and I headed to the Blue Ridge to survey for Golden-winged Warblers, as well as Blue-winged Warblers, with which they hybridize, and hybrid Brewster's and Lawrence's warblers. Golden-winged are decreasing across their range, in part because of maturation of the early successional habitat they require. Audubon North Carolina, led by Curtis Smalling, conducts research into the range and ecology of this species in North Carolina.

The highlight of the surveys was Shady Grove (2278 Peak Road, Creston, NC). We saw four male Golden-winged there, and surely would have seen more had we had time to explore the rest of the beautiful property. Co-owner Brent Cochran explained that he and Susan Wright manage the property for Golden-winged, mowing some areas to create early successional habitat. A bog on the property is home to bog turtles. Extensive gardens are the source for cut flowers and shade plants that Cochran and Wright sell at their nursery 10 miles north of Boone. Call ahead if you plan to visit, 828-297-4098. Also see www.shady-grove-gardens.com.

We struck out at the Allegheny Access of New River State Park, which is one of our chapter's two adopted Important Bird Areas, but we did find two more Golden-winged, a Blue-winged Warbler, and a Brewster's Warbler elsewhere.

Camping at New River State Park (Wagoner Road Access), assisting fisherman Ron, and canoeing via Zaloo's Canoes rounded out a fun weekend for the rest of my family. Let Ron or me know if you are interested in helping with these surveys next year.

Kim Brand

AUDUBON NC BLOG

Featuring photos and videos of birds and other wildlife from around the state, the Audubon North Carolina blog - www.ncaudubonblog.org - offers news dispatches from the front lines of bird conservation. Audubon naturalists and biologists from the mountains to the coast contribute to the site with reports from the field, news about policy issues, and great photos of birds and wildlife from all over North Carolina.

The blog site also includes a “Virtual Audubon” component that features virtual tours of the close to 100 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in North Carolina. Audubon’s IBA program is a global conservation road map that Audubon, its partners, and landowners use to identify and safeguard the natural areas and landscapes that are most critical to birds and their habitats. North Carolina IBAs include such birding hotspots as Grandfather Mountain, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and Jordan Lake. This section of the site includes detailed and up-to-the minute information about the priority bird species found at each IBA.

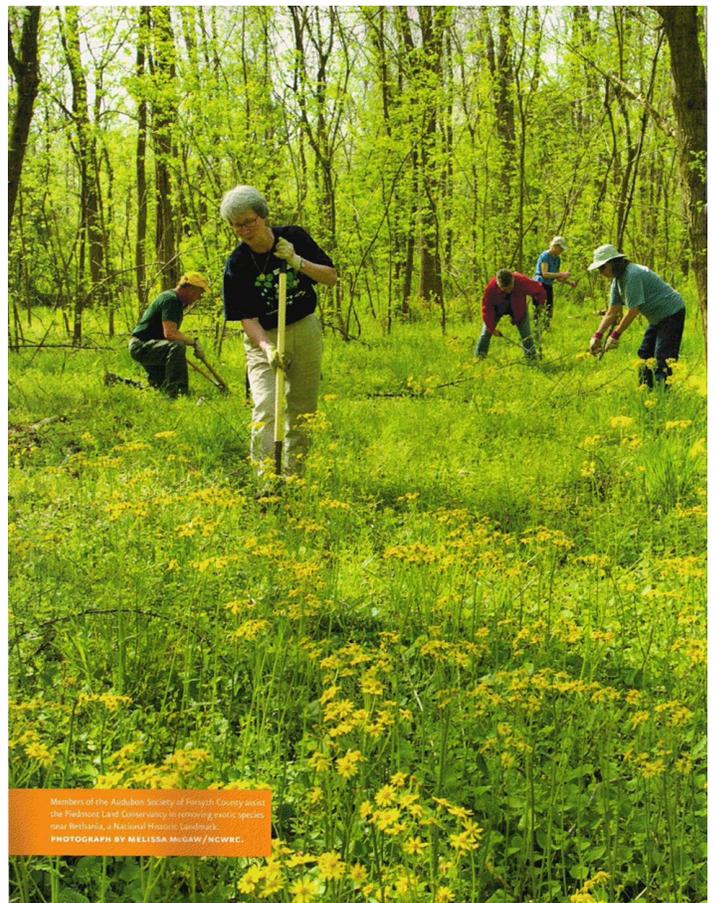
Recent posts on the Audubon NC blog include updates and photos of coastal birds such as Least Terns and Brown Pelicans that have started to nest in coastal North Carolina, the discovery of banded Piping Plovers in NC that were banded in the Bahamas, rare bird sightings, and a volunteer opportunity to monitor Cerulean Warblers on the Roanoke River. Audubon NC staff is using the blog as a space for bird conservation information from other agencies and conservation groups and local Audubon chapters.

“Our goal is to make the blog a vital resource for birders, nature-lovers, and the media,” said Curtis Smalling, IBA coordinator for Audubon North Carolina. “The blog is a real team effort, and we hope that it will become the go-to source for information about how we’re working with volunteers, local chapters, and partner groups to research and protect North Carolina’s diverse birdlife.”

Volunteer Kyle Smalling, a recent graduate of NC State University, is generously donating his time and expertise in designing and managing the website.

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF FORSYTH COUNTY FEATURED IN WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA

Forsyth Audubon’s work with the Town of Bethania and Piedmont Land Conservancy is prominently featured in the article, Protecting the Piedmont, which appears in the current July 2011 issue of Wildlife in North Carolina magazine. The article was written by Kathy Watts and photographed by Melissa McGaw. Several Forsyth Audubon members appear in the article’s photos as well as the full-page photo facing the Table of Contents. In that photo, Doug Demarest, Susan Andrews, Lisa Gould, Trena McNabb, and Shelley Rutkin were captured tackling multiflora rose in the Walnut Bottoms woodlands. Wildlife in North Carolina magazine is the official educational publication of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The article is not online, but subscription and other information about Wildlife in North Carolina can be found at <http://www.ncwildlife.org/WINC/>. If you would like to participate in the Forsyth Audubon Bethania project which includes replacing invasive non-native plants with wildlife friendly native species, contact Shelley Rutkin at shelleyr@windstream.net or 922-4758.



Members of the Audubon Society of Forsyth County assist the Piedmont Land Conservancy in removing exotic species near Bethania, a National Historic Landmark.
PHOTOGRAPH BY MELISSA MCGAW/NCWRC.

CONSERVATION CORNER

The Forsyth Audubon Conservation Committee recently met to review current work and discuss future goals. Leaders of our three major habitat restoration projects (Tanglewood Park, Historic Bethabara Park, and Bethania's Black Walnut Bottom) shared the great progress that has been made at each of these sites. Here's a brief summary of their reports:

1) Tanglewood Park – members of the committee have been working with park officials to increase the biodiversity of the Meadowlark Sanctuary field (near the BMX track) through removal of the current stand of Bermuda grass and replacement with native warm season grasses. In addition to improving habitat, a new reduced mowing schedule will decrease the costs of routine maintenance and avoid the associated air pollution. Hopefully, this restoration will increase chances of survival by providing food, shelter, and nesting sites for many of our declining species of birds that require a field habitat. According to the National Audubon Society's annual *State of the Bird* report for 2004, 70 percent of grassland bird species are in decline due to loss of habitat. Unfortunately, this situation has not improved. Last May's *State of the Birds* report by the U.S. Department of the Interior concluded that "Grassland birds are among our nation's fastest declining species....Forty-eight percent of grassland-breeding bird species are of conservation concern..." ((for more see http://www.stateofthebirds.org/newsroom/2011SOTB_NewsRelease.pdf)

2) Historic Bethabara Park – Last spring, volunteers planted more than 700 live stakes of species of native bushes (silky willow, silky dogwood, ninebark, and elderberry) along Monarcas Creek. As they grow, these wild-life friendly plants will reduce stream erosion as well as produce flowers, fruits, and shelter for many wildlife species. Other ongoing work at the park includes quarterly clean-up days, analyzing data from last year's breeding bird surveys and determining the next steps in the fight against invasive plants, especially kudzu and sacred lotus.

3) Bethania's Black Walnut Bottom – Work continues on planning for additional invasive plant removal and land management. Work days will be scheduled when the weather cools down. Members of Forsyth Audubon also contributed important information about native plants and wildlife for the newly printed Black Walnut Bottom Trail Guide created by the town of Bethania. You can pick up a copy of this guide at the trailhead located near the Historic Bethania Visitor Center. Our work in Bethania was also highlighted in the current July/August issue of the magazine *Wildlife in North Carolina*. See Shelley Rutkin's comments in this newsletter for additional details about this article.

As you can see, members of Forsyth Audubon have been busily engaged in the important job of conservation but we need YOUR help to continue and expand this crucial work. If you're interested in joining this committee, working on the projects described above, or have other ideas about conservation issues that seem like a good fit for our group, please jump in! Our next committee meeting is scheduled for September. We welcome your thoughts and your energy.

Lois Schneider

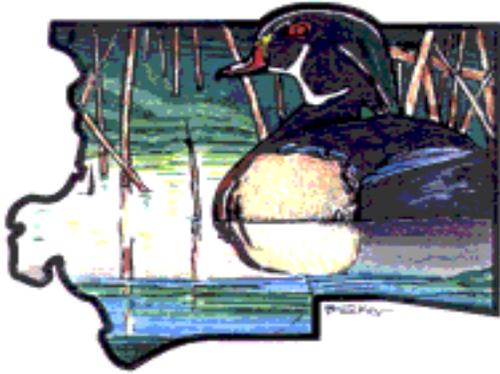


Our Mission

**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**

Audubon Society of
Forsyth County
P.O. Box 15111

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Winston-Salem, NC



Visit us on the web at www.forsythaudubon.org

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County

2010-2011 CHAPTER BOARD

President:	Ron Morris	725-1254
Vice President:	Jeremy Reiskind	727-0734
Secretary:	Kim Brand	896-0923
Treasurer:	Nita Colvin	
Membership:	Carol Gearhart	922-5854
Communication:	Phil Dickinson	659-2464
Education:	Bill Gifford	721-0201
Conservation:	Lois Schneider	768-6645
At-Large:	Tara Bohley	971-7362
	Susan Jones	768-9151
	Shelley Rutkin	922-4758

SACRED LOTUS PROJECT ON HOLD AT BETHABARA

Sacred Lotus has emerged once again, creeping across the wetland along Reynolda Road at Historic Bethabara Park. Because we are not certain whether our past efforts to yank, drag, and hack have hindered or encouraged this highly aggressive Asian plant, we're taking a break from fighting it this year. Instead, we will send a sample off to cooperative extension in Raleigh for genetic analysis, a step recommended by our local extension agents, Wendi Hartup and Craig Mauney. We will also use Forsyth Audubon's new handheld GPS unit to map the extent of the lotus near the end of its season so that we will have a benchmark for future efforts to remove it.

Kim Brand

If you are not yet a member, we invite you to join. Membership in ASFC includes membership in the National Audubon Society and is just \$20 for the first year. Send your check made out to ASFC to: Audubon Society of Forsyth County, P.O. Box 15111, Winston-Salem, NC 27113. Please include your name, email, address and zip code.

UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETING

The speaker for the September 27 meeting is Dr. Betsy Towns, who will give a talk entitled "Hovering: Hummingbirds in Nineteenth Century Art and Science." The subject of her talk is Martin Johnson Heade, a nineteenth century artist who painted many pictures of hummingbirds. Betsy, who teaches art history at UNCSA, did her doctoral dissertation at Chapel Hill on Heade.