

Whistler

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County Newsletter

February-March 2011

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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 1, 7:00 pm	Board Meeting – Arbor Acres Club House
February 5	Audubon NC Chapter Day
February 6-7	<i>The Legend of Pale Male</i> screenings (see page 5)
February 12, 9:00 am	Second Saturday Bird Walk – Salem Lake (Leader: Ron Morris)
February 18-21	Great Backyard Bird Count (see page 2)
February 19	Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge Day Trip (Leader: David Disher) (see page 2)
February 22, 7:00 pm	Chapter Meeting – Bethabara Park Visitor Center Ron Morris, “Alaska: Really Wild”
March 1, 7:00 pm	Board Meeting – Arbor Acres Club House
March 12, 9:00 am	Second Saturday Bird Walk – Archie Elledge (Leader: Carol Cunningham)
March 22, 7:00 pm	Chapter Meeting – Bethabara Park Visitor Center Dean Naujoks, “Keeping the Yadkin River”

UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETINGS

On February 22, Ron Morris will present a talk entitled, “Alaska: Really Wild.” Ron is currently the president of the Audubon Society of Forsyth County. He retired after 24 years as curator at the North Carolina Zoo and has studied birds around the world. Last summer he and his wife, Roseann, took a trip to Alaska. Using the marvelous photos that Roseann took, Ron will give us a naturalist’s view of Alaska.

On March 22, Dean Naujoks will present a talk entitled, “Keeping the Yadkin River.” Dean has been working for over 20 years to protect rivers and wildlife in North Carolina. From 2001 to 2008 he served as the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper. Now he is championing our river, the Yadkin. He is committed to working hard to provide a clean and sustainable river. He will bring us up-to-date on what’s happening on and around the Yadkin River.

Don’t forget that all our talks are preceded by light beverages and snacks, as well as good conversation, at 7:00 (the talks begin at 7:30).

PARK CLEAN UP EFFORTS SWITCH TO BETHABARA PARK

After many years of picking up trash at Miller Park four times a year, we are moving to Historic Bethabara Park. ASFC board members feel that clean-up efforts are more in need at Bethabara than at Miller Park, which is fairly clean for a city park. Also, it seems natural to become directly involved in stewardship at Bethabara Park since we now have our chapter meetings there. The first clean-up at Bethabara was held on January 22, and we will work there again in April, July, and October (specific dates to be announced). We will work only in the portion of the park west of Old Town Road, and because it is a large area, we will meet at the day care center parking lot (at Reynolda Road and Bethabara Park Boulevard) and split into two groups, one of which will drive to the gravel parking lot on Old Town Drive and work from there. For more information, contact Pam Wooten at pswooten@novanthealth.org.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 2011 Great Backyard Bird Count will take place over four days starting on Friday, February 18. The GBBC is an annual four-day event sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. Participants are asked to count birds in their own back yard or in their favorite birding spots, and report their counts on a web site set up for that purpose. The count helps to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent.

Bird watchers of all ages and ability levels are encouraged to participate. If you are interested, it takes as little as 15 minutes on one day. Alternatively, you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy. For instructions on what to do, go to the GBBC web site at www.birdsource.org/gbbc and click on the "How to Participate" link.

With a few more participants, Winston-Salem could move into the top three cities in North Carolina in terms of numbers of checklists. In 2010, we were fifth, with 178 lists, just one behind Wilmington, and 46 behind Raleigh. Charlotte and Durham (which were first and second with 520 and 358 lists, respectively). Both cities were in the top ten in the entire United States!

In terms of numbers of species, Winston-Salem was in sixth place statewide last year, with 83 species. With seven more species, we would have moved up to number two in the state behind only Wilmington.

I encourage you to get involved this year and move us up the list. For those of you who are willing to count beyond your own yard, Forsyth Audubon will be participating in a GBBC "event" at the Tanglewood Park visitor center on Saturday, February 19. There will be an "early bird" walk starting at 9:00 am, and indoor exhibits and activities starting at 10:00 am.

Bill Gifford

A "Beginning Birdwatching" class will be held at Forsyth Tech this spring. The first class will be held on April 2, 2011 and will meet at the West Campus (the old Bolton Street School). The remaining five classes will meet each Saturday at area hotspots like Bethabara and Tanglewood. Classes last for three hours beginning at 9:00 am. There will be no class on April 23, 2011 due to the holiday. The fee for the course is fifty dollars. More information may be found at www.forsythtech.edu.

FIELD TRIP TO PEE DEE NWR

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County is conducting an all day field trip to Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge. Pee Dee is the closest national wildlife refuge to Winston-Salem; it is located in both Anson and Richmond counties in south-central North Carolina, just six miles north of Wadesboro. Situated in the Triassic Basin of the lower piedmont, the refuge's 8443 acres of rolling hills covered with pines and hardwoods gently slope to the broad flood plain of the Pee Dee River. The refuge is home to a good variety of resident birds in addition to many wintering visitors. The refuge maintains some flooded fields for wintering waterfowl. There are nice short birding trails through the fields and woodlands. On a recent trip we observed a nice assortment of species. Red-headed Woodpeckers were common, and Chipping, Savannah, Swamp, Song, and White-throated Sparrows were all easily seen. In the fields we observed flocks of Pine Warblers and some small flocks of American Pipits. Many different raptors are present on the refuge with Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels being the most common.

The waterfowl wintering areas and wetlands are off limits to visitors during the winter months but we have arranged with the Assistant Refuge Manager to take our group into at least one of the off limit areas in the morning. In these areas we hope to see a good diversity of waterfowl. I would like for people who are planning on going to please e-mail me at dkdisher@gmail.com and include your cell phone number. This will enable us to contact you on the road and to get a good count for the refuge manager.

Logistics: We will meet at 7:15 am at the lower Macy's end of Hanes Mall and plan to depart by 7:30 am. People can group into car pools and leave the unused cars in the lot. It is 90 miles from Hanes Mall to the refuge headquarters, which is on Highway 52 just past Ansonville. The trip will take about 2 hours and 15 minutes with one bathroom stop. We will not attempt to stay together on the trip down but will meet up in the parking lot at the entrance to the refuge. To get to Pee Dee NWR we will leave Hanes Mall and get on I-40 East. We will then exit onto Highway 52 South. Highway 52 merges with I-85 past Lexington and continues south to Salisbury. Near Salisbury we will exit I-85/52 and turn left (south) on Highway 52. Highway 52 takes us all the way to the refuge headquarters, which is located just past Ansonville on the left side of the road.

There is a nice bathroom and a parking lot at the headquarters where we will regroup and make sure we have all of our participants. It would be possible to leave vehicles here if further car pooling is desired. ***Please pack food and drinks for lunch as there are no facilities in the immediate area.***

COLD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Fog, cold, rain, snow, ice! When you plan to count birds in December or January, these are some of the risks you take. We got a little of each this year, starting with temperatures hovering around ten degrees at the start of our Hanging Rock count on December 14. Eleven intrepid souls braved the chill to find 46 species. The highlight had to be the five Red Crossbills observed by Marilyn Westphal and Bill Gifford along the Wolf Rock Trail. Nine was a good number for Hermit Thrush, and Purple Finch, Pine Siskin and Savannah Sparrow also were seen. Eastern Screech Owl and Wild Turkey were observed during count week to increase the count total to 48.

Three days later, four of us conquered not only the cold, but ice on the road into New River State Park's Allegheny Access. With ice stopping our car and also covering the river, we hiked two miles into the park and then back. Add the snow cover, and there were not many birds. However, we did find three Common Ravens, four Pileated Woodpeckers and twelve White-crowned Sparrows. Alas, we failed to find a Ruffed Grouse for Shelley Rutkin. The Mt. Jefferson count was postponed earlier that week due to snow but was held on January 4. Ron Morris and John Haire did flush three or four grouse on that day, but Shelley was stuck at work.

Ron, Eric Harrold, Eric Stein and I also took part in the Stone Mountain CBC on December 30. There was some fog, but there also were plenty of birds other than nuthatches (none of any kind). We found 42 species, including a large roost of vultures and 72 White-crowned Sparrows. Ron and I also saw the first Savannah Sparrow recorded for this count in eight years. Weather notwithstanding, I look forward to next year.

Phil Dickinson

Fifty-six counters participated on twelve different routes for the 68th Forsyth County Christmas Bird Count, including seven first-timers and three feeder watchers. We found 80 species on count day (compared with last year's 77), plus another eleven for count week (last year, we had four). Our individual bird count (7,259) was about half of last year's (14,794) probably due to the weather, and to the lack of big Ring-billed Gull and Starling flocks (last year there were 8,010 of those two species; this year there were 247). Overall, I think we did great, especially considering the weather.

The most unusual finds were Selasphorus Hummingbird, Bald Eagle (count week; new species for the count), Peregrine Falcon (count week) and Baltimore Oriole. Other good finds included Horned Grebe, American Wigeon, Wilson's Snipe, all three owls, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, American Pipit, Savannah, Fox and White-crowned Sparrows, Rusty Blackbird, Pine Siskin, etc. The counts for Red-headed Woodpecker (nine, all at Tanglewood), Brown Creeper (nineteen) and Purple Finch (21; nineteen of them at two feeders) were all above average.

Thanks to everyone who counted and special thanks to ASFC President Ron Morris and Roseann Rush for hosting the count dinner.

John Haire

FORSYTH AUDUBON WINTER TRIP A HUGE SUCCESS

From January 14 to 17, 2011 Forsyth Audubon ventured once again to Beaufort, North Carolina for its annual winter trip. Along the way to and from the area and over the weekend our intrepid band of birders, 32 in all, found many species and had a good time.

After a social hour and planning session on the 14th the 32 birders started early on Saturday and scattered to bird the many interesting sites in the Beaufort and Morehead City area. From Calico Creek in Morehead City to Harker's Island our birders quickly tallied up a high species count that ultimately reached 144 for the long weekend.

The next day, Sunday, was another beautiful and relatively mild day. The group started the day with a short ferry ride to the Rachel Carson Preserve, where they found an Orange-crowned Warbler, Piping Plovers and many other shore birds. In the afternoon all birded their way north to the South River area, where they gathered for the traditional count dinner at the home of Mike and Marilyn Shuping. After some birding in their "yard" all were treated to a wonderful dinner prepared by our hosts. We are very grateful for the generous hospitality given by Mike and Marilyn.

All returned home on Monday but several stopped at Lilliput Pond and the Croatan National Forest in the New Bern area and found several interesting species, including the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and the elusive Bachman's Sparrow. It was a great way to end a very successful and enjoyable trip.

Don Adamick

CONSERVATION CORNER

As the newest chairman of ASFC's Conservation Committee, I find myself wrestling with defining the limits of my task. Conservation seems directly tied to almost everything that Audubon already does so well – from Christmas Bird Counts to our monthly chapter programs. But to me, the most important aspect of conservation is the protection and restoration of habitat. Without areas that provide shelter, food, water, and safe places to nest, we will have little wildlife to view and enjoy. Our chapter's 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*, also inspires me to engage in this work.

To this end, ASFC has decided to become directly involved with local habitat restoration efforts. Our first major project is in conjunction with the Town of Bethania and Piedmont Land Conservancy. We are working together to develop and carry out a management plan for the biologically rich area known as Walnut Bottoms. This is a new type of activity for our chapter, one in which we are tackling a large, hands-on, long-term project. Although much remains to be done, we have made measurable progress in our first year. So far, we have planted wildlife-friendly native trees and shrubs, led many bird and butterfly walks, conducted spring and Christmas bird counts, and participated in Bethania's Black Walnut Festival. In addition, we have begun surveying the plants, birds, and butterflies found on the property. Dedicated Audubon volunteers have lent their time and energy over three work days to grub out, cut down, or spray invasive plants such as Tree of Heaven and English Ivy. It may be hard to believe, but even removing multiflora rose can be fun in the company of folks working together for a worthwhile purpose!

ASFC is in the early stages of this great project and we could use your help. Our next work day will be scheduled as soon as the weather improves. Besides pulling and digging, we need folks to photograph and inventory plants and all types of animals as well as work on educational materials. A growing list of birds identified on the property can be seen on the eBird website (<http://ebird.org> – click on *View and Explore Data*, then *Bar Charts, Hotspots, Bethania - Walnut Bottoms*). Come out and bird this great spot and add your observations to the list! If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity or have suggestions about this project, please contact ASFC's Bethania leader, Shelley Rutkin, or Lois Schneider (at shelleyr@windstream.net or loissch@gmail.com). More information about the history of this project can be viewed by clicking the *Conservation* link on the ASFC home page and opening *ASFC Local Initiatives* as well as in previous editions of the *Whistler* (February 2010 and August 2010).

Lois Schneider



SPRING WEEKEND — APRIL 2011

This year's spring trip will be a study in wetlands ecology. We will head to northeast North Carolina and southeast Virginia to visit two classic forested wetlands.

The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, located mostly in Virginia but partly in North Carolina, includes over 111,000-acres of forested wetlands, with Lake Drummond, a 3,100-acre lake, at its heart and 100 miles of hiking and biking trails. It is a matrix of unique habitat types, many of which are rare. Within the refuge are found typical pocosins of the southeast, and some of the largest remaining Atlantic white cedar woodlands to be found anywhere.

Merchants Millpond State Park is where coastal pond and southern swamp forest mingle, creating one of North Carolina's rarest ecological communities. The 760-acre millpond is more than 190 years old. At the upper end of the millpond is Lassiter Swamp, an ecological wonderland containing remnants of an ancient bald cypress swamp — an eerie "enchanted forest" worthy of a fairy tale. Diverse habitats in the park support a variety of animals. Wetland wildlife is particularly abundant. One of several walking trails, Cypress Point Trail is wheelchair accessible, with benches and decks overlooking the millpond.

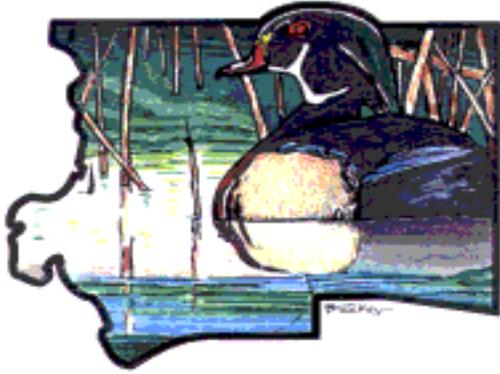
Rent a canoe or bring your own; the best way to explore Merchants Millpond is by gliding across the park's placid, shallow waters. A boat ramp and pier near the parking area offer access to the water. Marked canoe trails lead from the boat ramp to canoe campsites.

This will be a four day weekend to give us time to drive out there on Friday and back on Monday.

Details will be provided soon.

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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A great new film is coming to a/perture cinema in Winston-Salem on Sunday and Monday, February 6th and 7th at 8 pm. Sure to please nature lovers and film buffs alike, it is *The Legend of Pale Male*. The Legend of Pale Male is more than an extraordinary piece of New York history. It documents the mysterious power possessed by a single red-tailed hawk to open the eyes and hearts of die-hard city dwellers to the wonders of nature. Join filmmaker Frederic Lilien, whom we meet as a young man from Belgium looking to change his life, on an eighteen-year journey through life, death, birth, hope, and redemption. This film is showing for two nights only, and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Audubon Society of Forsyth County. The film is appropriate for children age seven to a hundred and seven. To see a preview of the film, go to: www.thelegendofpalemale.com.



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.