


Whistler

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County Newsletter

Winter 2008/2009

Printed on recycled paper 

UPCOMING EVENTS

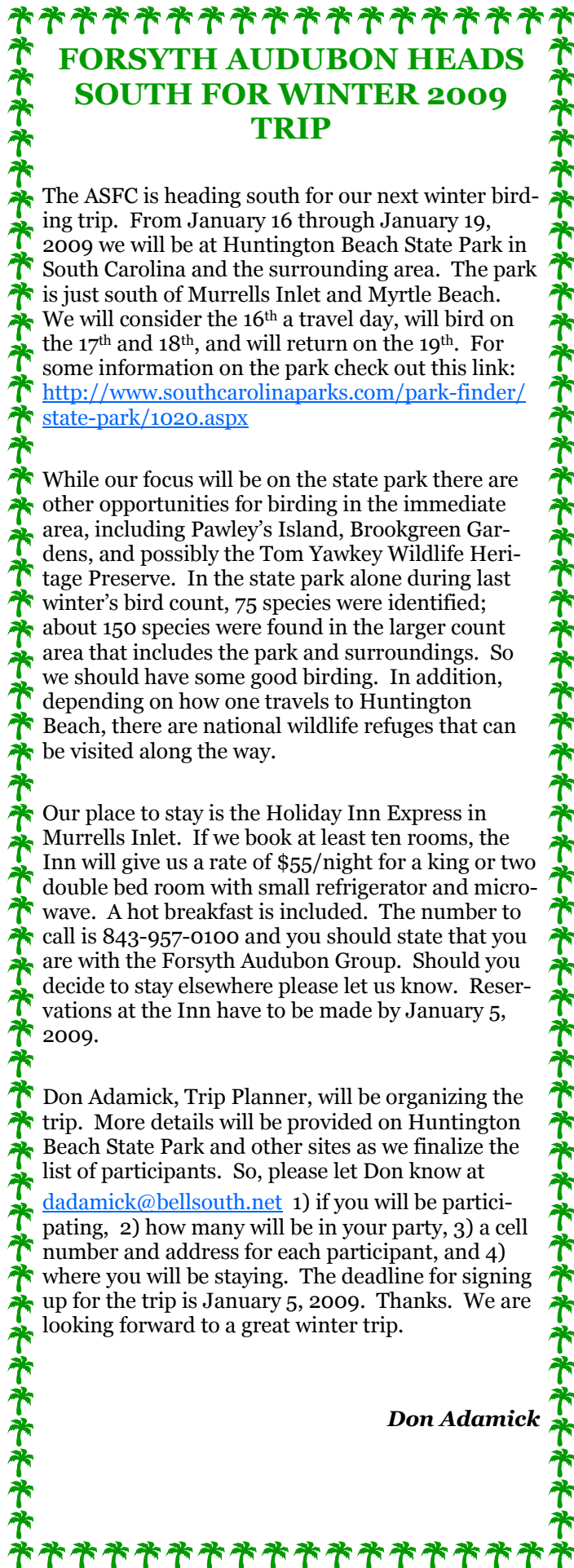
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| December 2 | Board meeting, Arbor Acres 7:00 pm |
| December 13 | Second Saturday Birdwalk, Civitan Park 9:00 am |
| December 20 | Christmas Bird Count, New River |
| December 27 | CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT |
| January 6 | Board meeting, Arbor Acres 7:00 pm |
| January 10 | Second Saturday Birdwalk, Salem Lake 9:00 am |
| January 16-19 | WINTER FIELD TRIP, HUNTINGTON BEACH STATE PARK (see page 2 for details) |
| January 24 | Miller Park cleanup 9:00 am |
| January 27 | Chapter Meeting, Sciworks. Hop Hopkins, Birding Brazil 7:30 pm (social hour begins at 7:00 pm) |
| February 7 | Chapter Day, NC Zoological Park |
| February 3 | Board meeting, Arbor Acres 7:00 pm |
| February 13-16 | GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT |
| February 14 | Second Saturday Birdwalk, Washington Park 9:00 am |
| February 24 | Chapter Meeting, SciWorks. Dennis Burnette, Birding England, Switzerland and Denmark 7:30 pm (social hour begins at 7:00 pm) |
| March 3 | Board Meeting, Arbor Acres 7:00 pm |
| March 14 | Second Saturday Birdwalk, Miller Park 9:00 am |

THE CHAT

In the Fall Edition of the *Whistler* I outlined many of the things that we had actively been doing as a chapter in the preceding months. The last item I listed was “we pay for our bulk mail permit, printing and postage for our newsletter.” This one single item comprises seventy to seventy-five percent of our total operating expenses. After much discussion and much data gathering, your Audubon Society of Forsyth County has made the decision that we have better ways of spending our money. As a bit of background information, we have over five hundred national members on our mailing list. About twenty to twenty-five percent of this number come and go on our active list. The rest may support the goals of Audubon and like receiving the national magazine but probably have little interest in participating on a local level or receiving our

local newsletter. To that end, we have decided that the March 2009 issue of *Whistler* will be our last paper distribution and we will then distribute the newsletter electronically. We will be getting in touch with you with more information about this transition soon. We will still have available a limited number of paper copies for handouts at meetings, walks, events, shops and for the few who do not have computer access, so don't worry that anyone will be left out! This way we will be able to have more newsletters, more timely updates, color photos, more pages and a much more environmentally friendly product. T. Gilbert Pearson, our neighbors in Greensboro, went electronic this fall (www.tgpearsonaudubon.org) and their new format has been very well received. It just makes sense as far as our finances and our mission statement are concerned. We hope that you agree.

Susan Jones



FORSYTH AUDUBON HEADS SOUTH FOR WINTER 2009 TRIP

The ASFC is heading south for our next winter birding trip. From January 16 through January 19, 2009 we will be at Huntington Beach State Park in South Carolina and the surrounding area. The park is just south of Murrells Inlet and Myrtle Beach. We will consider the 16th a travel day, will bird on the 17th and 18th, and will return on the 19th. For some information on the park check out this link: <http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/park-finder/state-park/1020.aspx>

While our focus will be on the state park there are other opportunities for birding in the immediate area, including Pawley's Island, Brookgreen Gardens, and possibly the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Heritage Preserve. In the state park alone during last winter's bird count, 75 species were identified; about 150 species were found in the larger count area that includes the park and surroundings. So we should have some good birding. In addition, depending on how one travels to Huntington Beach, there are national wildlife refuges that can be visited along the way.

Our place to stay is the Holiday Inn Express in Murrells Inlet. If we book at least ten rooms, the Inn will give us a rate of \$55/night for a king or two double bed room with small refrigerator and microwave. A hot breakfast is included. The number to call is 843-957-0100 and you should state that you are with the Forsyth Audubon Group. Should you decide to stay elsewhere please let us know. Reservations at the Inn have to be made by January 5, 2009.

Don Adamick, Trip Planner, will be organizing the trip. More details will be provided on Huntington Beach State Park and other sites as we finalize the list of participants. So, please let Don know at dadamick@bellsouth.net 1) if you will be participating, 2) how many will be in your party, 3) a cell number and address for each participant, and 4) where you will be staying. The deadline for signing up for the trip is January 5, 2009. Thanks. We are looking forward to a great winter trip.

Don Adamick

THE RAMONA SNAVELY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Ramona Snavely Volunteer award is named for one of the earliest members and a driving force behind our chapter. Her passion for the outdoors was legendary and she taught many of our members about the rhythm of birds, about their comings and goings, about clouds and bugs. She was our public face in the community and shared her knowledge through many speaking engagements.

This year we presented our first Ramona Snavely Volunteer Award to Bill and Susan Hammond, members of the ASFC for more than fifty years. Bill and Susan married in 1960 and made a conscious decision to do things together that they liked. With one pair of old binoculars between them they begin their lives together dedicating their time and their energies to birding and especially to the conservation aspects of Audubon. Bill and Susan have served in about every capacity that the chapter offers, lastly serving as Hospitality Chairs for over two decades. They also have covered the SciWorks/land fill area for our Christmas Bird Count for over twenty-six years, making them our resident Vulture and Gull experts! By way of recognizing Bill and Susan they received a framed David Disher photograph of our signature Wood Duck, wrapped in Turkey Vulture paper!

Susan Jones





A GREAT GIFT IDEA

The newly published Field Guide to Historic Bethabara Park is a glossy tri-fold produced by Waterford Press, Inc., the company that produces the Pocket Naturalist Guides with which many members of the Audubon Society may be familiar, including such guides as NC Birds, NC Wildlife, and a Field Guide to the Grand Canyon, to name just a few. There are over 140 species of invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians, trees and shrubs, wildflowers, birds and mammals represented in the Guide, as well as an introduction to the site and its history. This publication serves as a guide to the natural resources of both Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Funding for the Guide came from a grant from The Winston-Salem Foundation and the Board of Trustees of Historic Bethabara Park. The Guide was meticulously researched by Katherine K. Thorington, Ph.D., who received her doctorate in biology from Wake Forest University. Katherine worked with an advisory committee that included Phil Dickinson, former president of the ASFC, Dr. Peter D. Weigl, Professor of Biology, Wake Forest University, Dr. A. Daniel Johnson, Senior Lecturer in Biology, Wake Forest University, Jim Nottke, Bethabara Park trustee and member of the Treasure Tree Committee of the Forsyth County Cooperative extension Service and the Carolina Butterfly Society, Kenneth Bridle, Stewardship Director, Piedmont Land Conservancy, and Emily Allen, local wildflower expert. The guide would make a great “stocking stuffer” or teacher’s gift. It is \$5.95 and can be purchased at the Historic Bethabara Park Gift Shop, located in the Park Visitor Center.

FORTUITOUS FALL FINDS

Forsyth Audubon members experienced many great sightings for the late summer and early fall seasons. Bethabara was hopping for migrant warblers with more than 25 species reported along the greenway, including Mourning, Cerulean, Golden-winged, “Brewster’s”, Wilson’s, Bay-breasted, Nashville and Tennessee. Other good sightings at Bethabara included Philadelphia Vireo, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Lincoln’s Sparrow. Reynolda also had its share of warblers and an Olive-sided Flycatcher visited Lake Katherine for several days in August. A Red-necked Phalarope was a lifer for several birders at Archie Elledge, and a Black Tern, a Stilt Sandpiper and a Dunlin also made brief appearances there.

Royce Hough enjoyed a locally rare sighting when he spotted a Sandhill Crane soaring over his back yard. Rob Rogers discovered two Lark Sparrows at Civitan Park; other birders tried to relocate them, but found a Merlin and a Wilson’s Warbler instead. Eared Grebes, Caspian Terns and Common Terns were spotted at Salem Lake, and a Sedge Wren made a one-day stop at the Tanglewood Park wetland.

Just out of our immediate area, Jeremy Reiskind found a Swallow-tailed Kite near Seagrove, NC, and a very lost Brown Booby was at Claytor Lake State Park near Radford, Virginia for a few weeks. Normally, the closest this tropical resident gets to Forsyth County is the Caribbean Sea!

Thanks to the following birders for their reports: Kim Brand, Phil Dickinson, Ferenc Domoki, Royce Hough, Ron Morris, Jeremy Reiskind, Rob Rogers, Gene Schepker and Lois Schneider.

Winter birds are now arriving. Subscribe to Forsythbirds, our local email list (details on the ASFC website), and let us know what you find.

John Haire



GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this **free** event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

“The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It’s a great example of citizen science: Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity,” said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. “Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future.”

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online. Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards--whether in their own neighborhood or thousands of miles away. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

The data these “citizen scientists” collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

“The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent-wide bird-monitoring projects,” said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director, John Fitzpatrick. “With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented the fine-grained details of late-winter bird distributions better than any project in history, including some truly striking changes just over the past decade.”

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

When Frank Chapman started the Christmas Bird Census in December, 1900, as an alternative to the traditional Christmas hunt, it was a visionary act. But even the greatest foresight could not have predicted how important the CBC would become as a resource and tool for conservation. Efforts over the past 109 years have built a database of information on bird population trends unmatched by any other wildlife census”, says John Flicker, Audubon President & CEO.

U. S. and Canadian data, combined with that from Birdlife International, revealed the alarming declines in common birds worldwide as reported in the "2007 Watchlist" and "Common Birds in Decline" reports. Continued analysis of the data will examine how birds have been affected by climate change and how their habitats will shift in the future.

It's crucial that we continue our work as Citizen Scientists during the Christmas Bird Count, scheduled for December 27, 2008. Please call or email Linda G. Davis, at 924-1751 or davisl@mindspring.com to sign up for the count no later than December 10. Information regarding the count and team assignments will be sent the week before count day. Count period is December 14 thru January 5.

Linda Davis

REYNOLDA SITTING AND BIRDING

On Sunday, October 12 twenty-one volunteers participated in the Sixth Annual Big Sit at Reynolda Gardens. For twelve hours ASFC’s team, The Sitting Ducks, sat in their 17 foot circle near the Boat House and observed 42 different species of birds for a new local record. There was the suggestion that the last recorded bird, a Pine Warbler, was more likely a Wine Warbler as the intrepid sitters did get a bit silly, shall we say, towards the end. But we raised not only our level of patience while birding, but also our visibility in the community.

The following weekend, Reynolda Gardens sponsored a Bird Day on Sat., Oct. 18. Ten volunteers manned an information table for ASFC in the gardens, well positioned between Liz Schmid’s Wild Birds Unlimited table and Bill Abbey, the Bluebird Man. Bill Gifford, Phil Dickinson and Shelley Rutkin led bird walks throughout the day. Next year there is the possibility of combining the two events.

Susan Jones

CONSERVATION GRANTS

Forty-one projects in 24 states will receive the first TogetherGreen Conservation Innovation Grants. Audubon and Toyota have announced that the first-year recipients will receive grants totaling \$1.4 million. Audubon North Carolina will receive \$35,000 for efforts to protect coastal breeding habitat.

There were 120 applications for the first year of the program, and many of the recipients were local Audubon Chapters. Here are just a few of the projects that will receive funding:

Partner with local schools to connect children with nature and encourage low-income communities to take ownership of an area park (Los Angeles);

Educate private landowners about bird-friendly land management techniques to improve the health of local forest habitat (Vermont);

Help children green their schools and communities by planning energy conservation efforts (Colorado);

Work with students to transform weed-infested riverside by developing a reforestation plan to improve wildlife habitat (Ohio)

Involve students in restoring a filled-in wetland to create an outdoor laboratory and learning center (Washington)

You can find descriptions of all the projects at www.togethergreen.org.

The TogetherGreen program provides a great opportunity to improve wildlife habitat and provide a learning laboratory right here in Forsyth County. The City of Winston-Salem currently is expanding Muddy Creek Greenway, which runs behind three local schools. Our chapter is undertaking a plan to restore and maintain habitat along the greenway and provide educational opportunities for students and the entire community. City Recreation and Parks, the school system and other local nature organizations already have expressed enthusiasm for this effort. We hope to be ready to apply for our own Innovation Grant in Spring 2009.

Phil Dickinson



Meadowlark Elementary School, June 2008:

Dear Phil Dickinson,

Thank you for coming to take us on a bird walk. It was a very interesting activity and I learned a lot. It was very nice for you to come and spend time with us. I really appreciate that you came to teach us about birding. Sincerely, M B

Dear Tara O'Leary,

Thank you for using your time to take us on a bird walk. You really know a lot about birds. I really hope you can teach our class again! Sincerely, D P P.S. That bird pod was cool!

Dear Marilyn Shuping,

Thank you so much for the exciting bird walk. I had a great time examining the birds. I think it is awesome that you guys spend your time teaching a bunch of kids about birds. I really appreciate your coming. Sincerely, J G



Carolinarbirder Bill Majoros has generously provided an on-line version of a book he has written about Ospreys in general and a nest near Durham in particular. The book also features Bill's exquisite photography. Here is his message:

I've just posted the online version of my new book about ospreys, much of which focuses on an active nest outside Durham, NC that I monitored fairly intensively during the summer of 2007. Any comments are welcome, especially reports of any factual errors or typos I may have made.

The online version is up now and should remain available free-of-charge for the foreseeable future at <http://tinyurl.com/6zqto6>. Many of the bird photos are available separately in much higher resolution at <http://tinyurl.com/5s5cn4>



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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PILOT MOUNTAIN HAWK WATCH

Thanks to the 80 people who took part as observers and compilers in our annual September Hawk Watch at Pilot Mountain, and to the many other people who visited with us at Little Pinnacle. The educational display prepared by Susan Jones was a big hit with children and adults alike. For the month, we totaled 2101 migrating raptors, including 1858 Broad-winged Hawks. Our sighting of 53 Osprey, 20 Bald Eagles and 6 Peregrine Falcons indicate that those species are doing well. We also had 6 Merlins and 3 Northern Harriers.

Our 2008 totals represented a 50-percent improvement over 2007. Nevertheless, they are also 50 percent below our historical average. Much of this may have been due to wind and visibility conditions, rather than changes in bird population, as Mahogany Rock and other watch sites in the mountains recorded good numbers of Broad-winged Hawks. To see complete 2008 totals and to compare with prior years, log on to www.hawkcount.org.

Phil Dickinson

For membership information, please contact Lois Schneider at 768-6645. 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: Audubon Society of Forsyth County, P.O. Box 15111, Winston-Salem, NC 27113. Please include your name, email, address and zip code.