



Whistler

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County Newsletter

Summer 2006

Printed on recycled paper 

Mark your calendars now! A full listing of birdwalks and chapter meetings will be found in the fall 2006 newsletter, to be published in early September. In the meantime, mark your calendar for our chapter meeting on September 26. Our speaker will be Chris Moorman, whose talk is entitled, *Maintaining Bird Habitat along Urban Greenways*. Mr. Moorman, an Associate Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist at NC State University's Department of Forestry, will discuss keys to maintaining successful bird habitat along urban greenways. Mr. Moorman holds B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Georgia, and a Ph.D. from Clemson University.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 10	2nd Saturday Birdwalk: Tanglewood. Meet at 9:00 a.m.
July 8	2nd Saturday Birdwalk: Bethabara Park Wetlands. Meet at 9:00 a.m.
July 15	Miller Park Cleanup
August 1	Board Meeting: Arbor Acres clubhouse. 7:00 p.m.
August 12	2nd Saturday Birdwalk: Archie Ellege Water Treatment Plant. Meet at 9:00 a.m.
September 5	Board Meeting: Arbor Acres clubhouse. 7:00 p.m.
September 26	Chapter Meeting: Sciworks. Chris Moorman. Refreshments at 7:00 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m.

BIRDS WAKE UP EARLY

That's why Bill Gifford was also up before the crack of dawn yesterday roaming the area around the Tanglewood Park visitors center by 6:00, binoculars in hand.

"Early morning is usually one of the best times to bird watch," said Gifford, the president of the Audubon Society of Forsyth County. "As the sun comes up it gets the birds moving."

Fellow members and longtime birders Gardner and Margaret Gidley and Myrna Harris soon joined Gifford to survey bird species throughout the park as a part of the organization's annual count of different bird species, especially those here on their spring migration.

The group at Tanglewood was one of twelve that the chapter had scattered throughout the county yesterday identifying birds. More than 35 people took part in the count, or about half the chapter's active members. The information gathered will be fed into state and national bird databases to help document trends in bird populations.

For Gifford, the day's activities didn't need a purpose. "I just like looking," he said.

Although Gifford has been birding for about six years, he's still learning about the state's feathered friends. "You can learn a lot in a short time especially when you hang around with a group like this," Gifford said of his colleagues. Harris has been birding for more than 20 years, and the Gidleys have been seriously bird-watching for more than twice that long.

(continued on page 2)

SPRING BIRD COUNT

Saturday May 13, 2006 was a perfect birding day! Cool, sunny weather held all day (despite the forecast) and 117 species were spotted by 32 ASFC participants. Despite a later date due to Audubon NC state meeting, the birds were plentiful. A highlight of the day was a White Rumped Sandpiper, found by David & Susan Disher and Paul Powers, at Archie Elledge Treatment Plant. The group gathered for the count dinner on the picnic grounds at The Children's Home which proved a fine setting for a good day! Royce Hough's six year old grandson found a Solitary Sandpiper to add to the list at Reynolda. This is a wonderful reminder of how the responsibility we all share to educate the next generation of naturalists through our individual efforts and through our support of Audubon Adventures!

Locations birded included Miller, Hathaway, and Lockland Parks. Reynolda Gardens, the Children's Home, Bethabara Park, Lewisville, Tanglewood, CG Hill Park, the landfill, Bethania, Washington and Civitan Parks, and Fraternity Church Road.

The Spring Bird Count is the ASFC's only real fund-raising event of the year. Half of the money raised will be used to underwrite local education efforts, including the Audubon Adventures education program. That program is geared for children in the third through sixth grades. In past years, we have sponsored Audubon Adventures programs in over 50 classrooms in Forsyth County. Money raised from this year's Birdathon will determine the number of classrooms that we can sponsor in the 2006-2007 school year. The other half of the money raised through Birdathon supports Audubon North Carolina's Coastal Sanctuaries program. That program protects globally significant habitat along the North Carolina coast. You can still contribute! Any contribution you make is tax-deductible. Please send your contributions (checks can be made payable to ASFC) to ASFC, P.O. Box 15111, Winston-Salem, NC 27113. If you feel strongly about Audubon's mission of education and conservation, you should encourage your friends, family and neighbors to contribute as well; their contributions truly will make a difference... for our children and for our birds.

Linda Davis

Gifford also relies on practice and research to ramp up his avian aptitude. He travels through a wide variety of bird areas and takes his binoculars wherever he goes on his journeys. As a civil lawyer, he travels everywhere between the mountains and the coast.

Sometimes people give him funny looks when he pulls out his binoculars, he said, but he doesn't care. "I get a lot of grief for it, but I am totally unapologetic. I love doing this," Gifford said.

He also said that birders enjoy the spring count, because it gives them a chance to see and hear songbirds that winter in Central and South America and stop here to breed or move through on their way to more northerly nesting grounds. Spring is also the time when birds look their best. With the arrival of breeding season, markings become more colorful. "Most of the time the plumage is drab, but this is when it gets gorgeous," Gifford said.

Although Tanglewood is a great place to bird watch because it hosts a variety of habitats, conditions were tough early yesterday. Even though the air was filled with the sound of bird calls, fog made it hard to see them flitting around in the early morning light. Because of a state Audubon meeting last weekend, this year's local spring count took place a week later than usual. That had the group worried that many migratory species would have already moved on.

After driving and wandering by foot around the edge of the park, the group had spotted only a handful of species, when they ran across something different, a veery, which is a migratory bird they haven't seen that much of this year.

The group's luck then kept changing for the better as the fog lifted. After moving up to the area around the park's manor house and the tree-filled grounds and arboretum nearby, they began seeing birds everywhere. "The birds are really coming alive. I told you we didn't have to get up so early," Margaret Gidley quipped to the others.

She became overjoyed a short time later after the group spotted two more special migrants, an American redstart and a Baltimore oriole.

By 9 a.m. the group had already identified more than 35 species, two-thirds of the nearly 50 species it saw there last year.

"That redstart was beautiful," Gidley said. "That made the day worth it."

Jim Sparks, Winston-Salem Journal (May 14, 2006)



OPERATORS ARE STANDING BY: FREE CAMPSITE GIVEAWAY!

Hanging Rock State Park is within easy driving distance of Winston-Salem, has lots of habitat and is filled each summer with lots of potential birders and advocates for our environment. The park has not yet been designated as an IBA but, with nesting Peregrine Falcons, it soon will be. And we, as the local Audubon chapter, have a wonderful (and easy!) opportunity to help the park, address our own needs to be good stewards of our mission, and maybe open some new eyes to birding. What we are asking is that we send a couple of people a couple of times to Hanging Rock during the summer to present a Beginning Birding Walk (red bird = cardinal) and/or an evening program at the campground amphitheater (we have a slide program already ready and waiting). No Ginzu knives, but you do get a free campsite if you choose to stay. Contact me if you're interested. Susan Jones (768-9151 sljones@triad.rr.com)



SPRING BIRD TRIP

On April 20-23, a group of Forsyth Audubon members travelled to Huntington Beach State Park, the Santee Coastal Reserve, the Santee Delta Wildlife Management Area and Brookgreen Gardens. 128 species of birds were seen (or heard) at least once during the trip. For those of you who have never traveled to that area (which is just south of Myrtle Beach), all I can say is that it should not be missed. There is an opportunity to see not one but many Prothonotary Warblers in the cypress swamps of the Santee Coastal Reserve, and numerous Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers in the pine savannahs of the same Reserve. The Painted Buntings, Least Bitterns, and Black-necked Stilts at Huntington Beach are some of the other birds that make a trip to the area worthwhile, and the good news is that it is only a little more than four hours away. If anyone is interested in going, and needs maps or bird lists, let me know.

Bill Gifford (wgifford@triad.rr.com)



NOTEWORTHY SIGHTINGS

A blue grosbeak was seen at Civitan Park. Also seen at that location were a variety of swallows (tree, barn, and rough wing), a green heron, a snipe and a pair of orchard orioles. White throats are still being seen locally as of the writing of this newsletter. A wild turkey was seen in a tree at Bethabara Park.

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



STATE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONVERSATION EFFORTS

Audubon North Carolina held its annual state meeting in Wilmington on May 5-7. On Saturday, field trips, an afternoon symposium and dinner proceedings highlighted conservation efforts at our coastal sanctuaries and the ongoing OLF fight.

Local chapter members Linda Davis, Larry Davis, Phil Dickinson and Bill Gifford took part in a field trip that visited the shore bird nesting area at the north end of Wrightsville Beach. Through the wonderful efforts of Audubon NC's Walker Golder and Andy Wood, and many community volunteers, this restored habitat last year was home to 614 pairs of nesting Least Terns, as well as Black Skimmers, American Oystercatchers, Wilson's Plovers, Whimbrels and other species. Just four years earlier, no Least Terns nested there. Other field trips visited other coastal sanctuaries.

At the afternoon symposium, Walker, Andy and Sidney Maddock gave an overview of coastal conservation efforts and some of the issues they face. UNCW ornithologist Jamie Rotenberg invited individuals to join the Painted Bunting Observer Team (if contacted, email pbot@uncw.org). This Citizen Science project focuses on strategies for sustaining area populations of this striking bird. In addition, Salinda Daley gave an update on the progress of the NC Birding Trail (for more information see www.ncbirdingtrail.org).

In dinner remarks, Audubon NC Executive Director Chris Canfield highlighted the coastal conservation efforts. He also warned that, although a court ordered the U.S. Navy to redo its study of the environmental impact of the planned OLF, the fight against the landing field is far from over. The Cape Fear Garden Club and other individuals also received awards for their work with the coastal sanctuaries.

Phil Dickinson



Audubon members flock to region for bird spotting (Wilmington Star News, May 6, 2006)

They caw, they chirp, they fly. They sing, they swoop, they glide. And now, they're being spied on by dozens of birding eyes.

The 2006 Annual Meeting of Audubon North Carolina started Friday and continues until Sunday. About 80 people are flocking to see birds of the southeastern part of the state by boat, on foot and on wheels.

"Right now is the peak of bird migration," said Andy Wood, education director for Audubon North Carolina. Throughout the weekend, birders will take visual safaris to bottomland hardwood swamps on the Northeast Cape Fear River, to longleaf pine forests and to barrier islands. Seven trips will be held between today and Sunday to spot birds such as yellow-throated Warblers, waterbirds, terns and ospreys. "We'll see rarities like the Red-cockaded woodpeckers, warblers," Wood said.

Another bonus to birding? It equals tourism dollars for Wilmington. Wood said each person will spend between \$250 to \$350 this weekend. "This is one example of how the health and well-being of our environment is linked to the health and well-being of our economy," Wood said. "Good birding means good tourism dollars."

But it goes beyond birds, too. "We do more than just look at birds," Wood said. "We take in the whole ecosystem."

Veronica Gonzalez

ASFC members have been busy making presentations to a number of groups here in our community including the following: in February, Susan Jones gave a talk at the Lewisville Garden Club, while in April Bill Gifford spoke to the West End Garden Club. On March 22, 2006, Liz Schmid presented three environmental education programs to students at Cook Elementary School. Students in kindergarten, first and second grade were treated to Liz's wonderful explanation and videos of birds they might expect to see at home or in the schoolyard. The programs were the result of a grant to ASFC from the Reynolda Rotary Club to provide environmental education to Cook Students. Linda Davis is a member of the club, which has "adopted" Cook School by providing mentors, an annual Book Fair and seasonal parties for the children. Ted Burcaw, principal of Cook School, was extremely grateful to Audubon for providing enrichment activities for his youngest students. Outreach such as this is essential to educate and inspire the next generation of naturalists!

New screen available for slide presentations!

OF GENTIANAS AND BROADWINGS AUTUMNAL EQUINOX WEEKEND, SEPTEMBER 23-24

No. Gentians *do not* fly. They are small, impossibly blue wildflowers immortalized in William Cullen Bryant's poem "Ode on a Fringed Gentian." And they grow in North Carolina's mountains in the fall, specifically at the Nature Conservancy's Bluff Mountain Nature Preserve in Ashe County near West Jefferson. And, since Bluff Mountain rises to almost 5,000 feet, it is also a good vantage point for seeing migrating hawks. We have arranged for a guide to take us on a hike of this diverse ecological area, distinguished by over eleven natural communities. We'll walk through a Carolina hemlock forest to a dwarf white oak forest to a broad high plateau wetland or Southern Appalachian fen. Since the 1800's naturalists have explored this ancient landscape, cataloging its many unique natural communities and species.

We'll spend the night in the area (West Jefferson, Glendale Springs, etc.) and the next morning make the short drive to the New River State Park for a fall survey of our Important Bird Area. This will be handled in much the same way as the spring IBA will be handled with various teams going to specific survey points and identifying and counting birds from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m. Curtis Smalling, Audubon NC's Mountain Region Biologist, will be assisting us. And again, we'll have time to bird, play and enjoy the area after the morning's survey is completed. A small amount of money will be available to participants to help off-set expenses. If interested, contact Susan Jones at 768-9151 or sljones@triad.rr.com



David Disher



The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession, by Mark Obmascik. Free Press, 2004, 272 pp. \$13.00

This book is an entertaining read for a rainy Spring day or a Summer morning at the beach. About 675 bird species call North America home during part of the year, and another 60 or so stray over, at least as far as Attu, Alaska, or the Dry Tortugas in Florida. Find out what it takes in time, perseverance and \$\$\$\$ to see or hear them all in one Big Year.

Follow the 1998 Big Year efforts of extreme birders Sandy Komito, Al Levantin and newcomer Greg Miller as they crisscross the continent in serious competition to find the most species. Komito and Levantin had earned their fortunes and had time and money to burn. Miller was a computer programmer holding down a 40-hour a week job.

All birders can relate to situations that unfold: telling your spouse about the cool bird at the landfill, the cancelled Hatteras pelagic tour, missing that one "easy" bird you know is there. The book also is a travelogue for all the great birding spots that you likely have on your must-go-there-sometime list. And, if you are thinking of doing some type of Big Year, learn about the strategies and obstacles. Every birder I know who has read the book has thoroughly enjoyed it.

Phil Dickinson

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

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The Audubon Society of Forsyth County

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A GENTLE REMINDER

Roughly three dollars of the twenty dollar national membership fee goes to your local chapter. Please “think globally, act locally” and consider the possibility of contributing directly to the local Audubon chapter to support our educational efforts, the publication and distribution of this newsletter, and our informative and entertaining speakers series.



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

David Disher