

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

April, 2001

(Vol. XXX, No. 4)

c/o Ginger Travis
5244 Old Woods Rd.
Hillsborough, NC 27278

April meeting

Date and time: Monday, April 23, 7:30 p.m.

Place: The lounge, **Binkley Baptist Church**, corner of Willow Drive and the Hwy. 15-501 Bypass (next to University Mall) in Chapel Hill. Entrance to the parking lot is on Willow Drive.

Program: Artic Seabirds at the North Carolina Zoo Debbie Zombeck, Animal Management Supervisor at the NC Zoo, will discuss how the zoo acquired birds for the seabird exhibit; natural history of the Horned Puffin, Parakeet Auklet, and Thick-billed Murre; and what problems these birds face in the wild. Debbie is responsible for overseeing the care of the birds at the aviary, arctic seabird exhibit, and Peregrine Falcon exhibit. Remember to come early for socializing and refreshments at 7:15 pm.

Special field trip, N.C. Zoo: June 16, 8 a.m.

This trip will be led by Karen and Joe Bearden. Please RSVP with Karen: chickadeebirders@earthlink.net or call 844-9050. Families welcome. Meet at Glen Lennox shopping center in Chapel Hill to caravan to the zoo. (north side Hwy. 54 just east of 15-501 Bypass).

May meeting

May 21 (last spring meeting) – Potluck picnic, 6:30 p.m., Ebenezer State Recreation Area, Jordan Lake. Last meeting before the summer break. (Note: there will probably be a small entrance fee per car at Ebenezer.) Your family members are welcome. Bring a dish to share, plus your own utensils and beverage. Please note that the date and time differ from our regular meeting time. Ebenezer has a well marked entrance on SR 1008 (Beaver Creek Rd., the continuation of Farrington Rd.) 2.3 miles south of Hwy. 64.

Last regular Sat. a.m. field trip, 4/21

April 21 will be the last, because spring bird counts begin the following weekend. (List follows.) To go on the last spring field trip (which should be great for

migrants), meet in the parking lot of the Glen Lennox shopping center in Chapel Hill at 7:30 a.m. This is on the north side of Hwy. 54 just east of the 15-501 Bypass. All are welcome, especially beginners. No reservations necessary. Be prepared for short hike. Wear stout shoes and bring binoculars. You'll return by noon.

Spring bird counts

by Will Cook

All are welcome, including beginners, but you must sign up ahead of time. Beginners will be teamed with experienced birders.

Sun. 4/29/01 - Durham Spring Bird Count

Contact: Mike Schultz, mshultz@duke.edu, (919)490-6761

Sun. 5/6/01 - Chapel Hill SBC

Will Cook, cwcook@duke.edu, (919)660-7423

Sat. 5/12/01 - Wake County North American Migration Count

Contact: Susan Campbell, ncaves@utinet.net, (910)949-3207

or John Gerwin, ncs1416@mindspring.com, 919-715-2600

Sun. 5/13/01 - Jordan Lake SBC

Contact: Carol Williamson, carolw@sandler-recht.com, (919)383-2364

You can find this information on the web at <http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc/countsched.html>

Forms, assignments, procedures, and map are on the Chapel Hill Bird Club site:

<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc/>

Wildathon 2001

Both Wake Audubon and New Hope Audubon are holding wildathons to raise money for Audubon's coastal sanctuaries (New Hope Audubon's fundraiser also benefits the Mason Farm Biological Preserve). Dates: May 12 (New Hope Audubon) and

May 19 (Wake Audubon). Participants have a lot of fun. Contacts: Kate Finlayson for New Hope, email: katefin@yahoo.com, and Karen Bearden for Wake, email: chickadeebirders@earthlink.net.

Recording your sightings with a handheld computer

by Kent Fiala

Less than a year ago I began using AviSys, a birding database program that runs on Windows PCs. Since I am a computer professional myself, it's hard to explain why I put off computerizing my records until so recently, but it's tied in with the fact that for too long I've been embarrassingly neglectful about keeping records on a regular basis. On the one hand it grieves me now that I've been so lax about record-keeping for much of my life--there are stretches of years where I have practically no records at all, even for exact dates of lifers. On the other hand I'm very glad I had no more than 34,732 sightings to enter for my 40 years of birding or I never would have finished.

AviSys is a program that is easy, even fun, to use. To record a sighting, you simply enter species name, date, location, and optional notes. It's hard to explain how simply and quickly you can do this without actually demonstrating. And since locations are linked geographically, entering a sighting for, say, your yard, automatically puts it in a hierarchy of geographical lists: county, state, ABA, etc., so you don't need to manually maintain such lists separately. If you never specifically kept, say, state lists or year lists, AviSys gives you them for free. Generating a report of your list for any particular time period and/or geographic area is as simple as can be.

But the thing that has me most excited about AviSys is its new Palm interface. Adopting AviSys did a lot to improve my record-keeping, but the Palm interface has revolutionized record-keeping for me. (A "Palm" is a brand of handheld computer, a tiny machine you can carry in your pocket but that has several times the memory and computing power of the early generations of desktop PCs. There are many brands and models of handhelds, most falling into one of two groups, those that run the Palm operating system, and those that run Windows CE. The software I'll discuss here runs only on Palm-compatible devices.) Until last December the thought of purchasing a handheld had never even crossed my mind, but when I learned of the AviSys Palm interface, I had to have one immediately. I was in a hurry to get it before a trip to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, so I didn't do a lot of product research, but I'm happy with the choice I made, a Palm Vx. The Palm Vx is extremely light and compact, no burden to carry at all times, so I no longer have any excuse not to record every bird I see--I always have a fresh checklist with me. And I can't even complain that it's too much bother to record

sightings once in the field and then to copy everything over again to enter it into my PC when I get home--that second step is now automated. If you get no pleasure from technology for its own sake, and you don't already have a Palm, the price may be a bit steep for just a bird recording device. But you'll probably soon begin exploiting it for all the other things it can do besides record birds. (Seinfeld fans may recall how useful it can be for calculating tips.) And actually it can do other bird-related things besides record sightings. I have Will Cook's entire Triangle Birder's Guide web site loaded into my Palm, and I've begun a small collection of bird ID articles. It's only a matter of time until someone writes the first Palm field guide.

Since probably a lot of people are as unfamiliar with the Palm as I was until a few months ago, I'll summarize the mechanics. There is actually no AviSys software that runs on the Palm. Instead you use a database program called JFile, which you can license through Perceptive Systems (AviSys) or download directly from the makers of JFile. You can even download it for free for a trial period. If all you want to do is to carry your life list around with you, you can easily create your own JFile database for that, without a need for AviSys. In fact you can download a free database with ABA species already loaded. What you'd be missing, though, is a way to record a trip, transfer the trip list to your PC database for a permanent record, and start over with a fresh empty checklist for the next trip. That's what the AviSys interface buys you. It works like this: You run a procedure in AviSys to generate a JFile database. This database contains a list of all the bird species in the source checklist, three columns of check-boxes for entering ticks, and blank spaces for entering date, location, and comments. You then transfer ("HotSync") the database to your Palm. On your birding trip you run JFile to enter your ticks and data (just like on a paper checklist, except it's on a tiny computer screen--ask me to show you at the next CHBC meeting), and when you get home you HotSync the database back to your PC, run a procedure in AviSys to load the sightings, and then regenerate a new blank database to send back to your Palm, and the cycle repeats.

In the field, JFile is very easy to use. Depending on your font choice, about 10 species display on the screen at one time, but you can easily scroll or better yet use the search function, which can search on either parts of names or FLBAs (Four Letter Bird Acronyms--I made that up). You can also have the computer tell you your current species count, so you don't have to keep re-counting manually if you're on a Big Day.

I should say that there are other database programs available besides AviSys. But I haven't tried the others and I can only write about the one that I know. I only recently learned that there is another one, called Bird Recorder, that also has a

Palm interface. As far as I know, none of the others do--yet.

The AviSys web site is
<http://www.avisys.net> (note the ".net"; avisys.com is something else entirely).

To order discounted American Birds . . .

forwarded to Carolinabirds

by Will Cook, 4/5/01

This year's issue of AMERICAN BIRDS with the full results of the 101st Christmas Bird Count will go to press on May 14, 2001. The discounted price is \$10.00 (US), plus \$3.00 shipping and handling. Send check payable to "National Audubon Society" to:

101st Christmas Bird Count Subscriptions
National Audubon Society
PO Box 689
Lahaska, PA 18931

Notice: Discount good only to May 14. Orders for limited inventory after May must be prepaid at \$35 (US) plus \$10 shipping and handling (U.S. and Canada only). No shipment overseas. In the memo line of your check, please write "for 101st CBC issue", and make sure to include your name and current address.

Maps available for new eastern N.C. paddle-trail network

by Ginger Travis

Following the success of the Albemarle region's small-boat trail system, the state developed canoe and kayak trails for the remainder of sounds, rivers and creeks in eastern North Carolina. The new trail network was unveiled March 31. Maps are available now at: www.ils.unc.edu/parkproject/nctrails/html. A free printed map will be available in a few weeks. You can order a printed map by emailing: Tom.Potter@ncmail.net Or call Tom at 919-751-2792. This trail system will be great for people who like to bird and botanize from a canoe or kayak.

"More birds and fewer people," Shell Mound, Fla. was trip highlight

by Liz Pullman

[CHBC members Liz Pullman and Audrey Booth did a Fla. birding trip March 3-12.]

In spite of all the hype about birding in south Florida, our best bird day was way down upon the Suwannee River -- way, way down. The Lower Suwannee River and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge is located along the big bend on the west coast of Florida. Although best known as a nesting site and feeding ground during breeding season, it was spectacular for March birding. After staying overnight in Chiefland, we drove down Fla. 347, stopping at the north entrance to the refuge to visit headquarters and walk

the River Trail through a cypress swamp (loaded with Northern Parulas) and ending at the river. We continued south and turned onto Fla. 326 to the Shell Mound Archaeological Trail. Here on the river is an informal (sand) boat launch and rudimentary fishing pier -- and hundreds of birds on the nearby and partly exposed mud and oyster flats. We found good numbers of Black Skimmers, Oyster Catchers, White Pelicans, Red Knots, Marbled Godwits and Whimbrel among the more common shorebirds. Long-legged Waders were plentiful and a Northern Harrier and Bald Eagle were spotted overhead. We scoped the entire area, almost 360 degrees, finding birds, birds, and more birds until, after over an hour, the rising tide scattered them.

We did make it down to Cedar Key but the real highlight was the Shell Mound area -- a trip well worth a detour if you are headed south and like more birds and fewer people!

Deer videotaped eating songbirds

forwarded to Carolinabirds 3/29/01

by Bob Lewis

"White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) Predation on Grassland Songbird Nestlings" by Pamela J. Pietz1 and Diane A. Granfors. Abstract: White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) were videotaped depredating four songbird nests in grassland habitats in southeastern and north central North Dakota, 1996-1999. Deer ate two Savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), two grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), one clay-colored sparrow (*Spizella pallida*), one red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) and three brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) nestlings. Deer removed nestlings quickly (5-19 sec/nest) at night (22:00 to 05:17 Central Daylight Time) and left no evidence of predation. Although probably opportunistic, deer predations clearly were deliberate and likely are more common than generally believed.

www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/2001/deerpred/deerpred.htm

Peregrines return to Devil's Courthouse

by Reece Mitchell

(from Carolinabirds, 3/19/01)

Note: These nesting peregrines are some of the most conveniently located for birders to see in North Carolina.

What is probably the same pair of Peregrine Falcons that raised young at Devil's Courthouse last year is back. . . Both birds are fully mature and the female is spending a lot of time at the old eyrie. . . . At one time today she appeared to be turning inside the eyrie as she would when preparing the scrape. Devil's Courthouse is near mile 422 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the cliff can be viewed from the parking lot. Binoculars are all that is needed to see the falcons when they're moving or facing out. If

they are facing away they are hard to find on the cliff and in any event a scope makes things easier. [April 11, Reece reports female is now sitting on eggs.]

Sad news from the Croatan

by John Fussell, to Carolinabirds, 4/11

This past weekend I found a Swainson's Warbler nest (from last year) in the Croatan National Forest, near Havelock. The nest (or almost all of it) was on the ground in a patch of cane. A little bit of the nest was still attached to cane stalks. I will be checking the area to see if Swainson's breed there this year (didn't hear any this weekend).

In the same Pond Pine Woodland/Wet Pine Flats area I also had Ovenbirds, Black-and-white Warblers, 3 or 4 Black-throated Green Warblers, and Prothonotary Warblers, and others. This is one of the types of habitats in which Black-throated Green Warblers, a declining species in the Coastal Plain, breed within the Croatan.

Unfortunately this nice area of National Forest will be destroyed by the new Havelock Bypass. Although this area is a wetland, there will be no wetland mitigation for it. The reason is that the consultants that did the environmental work on the project for DOT and the Corps of Engineers have ruled that this area is a "biological wetland" but is not a "jurisdictional wetland".

Jordan Lake Sunbirds

by Sandy Cash (to Carolinabirds)

I, like so many others, went out yesterday morning (April 8) to enjoy the sunny weather and get in some birding before the heat got too stifling. I made passes through Hemlock Bluffs NP, the 751 gamelands at Jordan Lake, and Mason Farm. Migrants included WHITE-EYED VIREO, YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER, LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, OVENBIRD, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, and BLACK-AND WHITE WARBLER. Pine warblers were singing in good numbers, as well as the usual suspects.

By far the most unusual sighting was an apparently mated pair of BAREBUTTED SUNBIRDS (also known as nude sunbathers) at the Jordan Lake gamelands off of 751. These appeared to be residents newly molted into breeding plumage - - thankfully, no breeding behavior was observed...

Join the Chapel Hill Bird Club

Membership is on the calendar year, Jan.-Dec., and costs \$15 for individuals or families, \$10 for students. Benefits include the newsletter, interesting programs, weekly field trips all over the Triangle and once-a-year trips to the coast and mountains, camaraderie with other birders, and easy access to

the Carolinabirds listserv and the CHBC website (both maintained by CHBC member Will Cook). The club meets eight times a year: Sept. through Nov. and Jan. through May (fourth Monday of the month).

To join, please make your check payable to the Chapel Hill Bird Club and send it to the treasurer, **Fran Hommersand, 304 Spruce Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514**. If you have questions, call Fran at 967-1745.

Everyone with an interest in birds will find a warm welcome at the Chapel Hill Bird Club.

Club officers

President: Magnus Persmark (933-2255, emp34157@glaxowellcome.com)

Vice President (CH): Judy Murray (942-2985, jmurray@unc.edu)

Vice President (RDU): Karen Bearden (birders@aol.com)

Secretary: Karen Piplani (karenpip@aol.com)

Treasurer: Fran Hommersand (967-1745)

Field Trip Chairman: Doug Shadwick (942-0479)

Bulletin Editor: Ginger Travis (942-7746, Ginger_Travis@unc.edu)

Refreshments chair: Karen Piplani (karenpip@aol.com)

<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc>