

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

December, 2001

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c/o Ginger Travis

5244 Old Woods Rd.

Hillsborough, NC 27278

Reminder: no December meeting, Next meeting, January 28

Our January speaker will be Brian Bockhahn, a ranger at Falls Lake and an excellent birder. His topic: (no surprise!) birding Falls Lake. Something great seems to turn up at Falls every year – most recently, a White Pelican and a Western Grebe. This should be a very interesting talk, because Falls is birded less intensively than Jordan, and there are probably good discoveries still to be made.

A call for your list(s)

by Ginger Travis, editor

Got a life list? Got several/many/an inordinate number of lists? Whether you're a casual or a semi-obsessive lister, why not tell the club how many birds you've got in all the categories you care about? We'll publish list numbers in the February Bulletin. Possible categories are world, ABA area, North Carolina, Triangle counties (including Orange, Durham, Chatham, Wake and Granville), and yard. And if you've got other categories you'd really like to include, let me know.

Email me: ginger_travis@unc.edu

Or use regular mail: 5244 Old Woods Rd., Hillsborough 27278

Outer Banks trip in Jan.; time to sign up

Doug Shadwick will lead the club's traditional Outer Banks field trip on the three-day Martin Luther King birthday holiday weekend: Jan. 19-21. Pea Island is the main destination. Alligator River NWR and Lake Mattamuskeet are possibilities. Let Doug know if you're interested (942-0479). This is a particularly good year to go to the coast because so many western birds have wandered into N.C. airspace. No telling what you might see.

Local Christmas bird counts

It's not too late to sign up for the later Christmas counts. Here's the complete local list:

12/15 (Sat.) Raleigh, John Gerwin, 919-715-2600 or Susan Campbell, 910-949-3207.

12/16 (Sun.) Durham, Mike Schultz, 490-6761

12/23 (Sun.) Chapel Hill, Will Cook, 660-7423

12/29 (Sat.) Falls Lake, Brian Bockhahn, 676-1027

12/30 (Sun.) Jordan Lake, Carol Williamson, 383-2364

If you need to brush up on procedures or copy the count forms, go to Will Cook's website: www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc. Scroll down to the section on counts and print out whatever you need.

There are dozens of other Christmas counts held all over the state and in South Carolina, and counters are usually desperately needed. So if you're in the mood to bird somewhere else, check out the Carolina Bird Club website for a listing of other counts: www.carolinabirdclub.org.

What's that number on your . . .

mailing label? In the upper righthand corner? If it's **01/02**, that's the **expiration date** of your CHBC membership. Wouldn't it be great to renew early this year? Our treasurer sure thinks so. Membership is on a calendar year basis. Benefits include the Triangle checklist, Sat. a.m. field trips, special trips (Outer Banks, mountains), interesting speakers at meetings, the club website, the annual picnic, and the Bulletin. So make out your check for \$15 (\$10 if you're a student) to the Chapel Hill Bird Club and mail it to Ruth Roberson, 3406 Ogburn Ct., Durham, NC 27705. To renew for more than one year (greatly encouraged!), multiply \$15 by the number of years. And while you're at it, why not give a membership to encourage someone's interest in birding?

In the Pantanal, Brazil, pt. 2

by Magnus Persmark

We continued further south along the Transpantaneira road, crossing one bridge more decrepit than the other (the worst ones on foot) to reach the Jaguar Reserve Lodge at dusk. Unfortunately, an impressive and road-spanning wildfire prevented us from searching for its namesake that evening. The landscape was here more open and wet, criss-crossed with creeks and wetlands that clearly explained why road access had been established so recently. The Jaguar Reserve was a working pousada, or ranch, that was in the process of being turned into an eco-tourism lodge.

Here a pair of spunky Common Tody-Flycatchers was observed building their hanging nest right by the entrance, and Sayaca Tanagers and Chopi Blackbirds foraged in the trees and grounds, respectively. We learned that ranchers in the Pantanal were facing severe difficulties in sustaining the traditional way of life, due to dry weather conditions and the vagaries of world market meat prices. While cattle ranching was now a complement to tourism, a serious-looking spear in the dining room gave a reminder of days when a good jaguar was a dead jaguar; the spear had been used by the grandfather of the current manager. His father, a grizzled man of indeterminate age, had used a gun to hunt the big cat, but the younger generation might hopefully be able to realize value in a healthy jaguar population. Value is a relative term here, though, as this was an extremely modest operation and margins must have been very slim, be they from cattle or tourists.

A rainsquall helped extinguish the worst fires a day or so later, and we were able to set out on a nocturnal quest for the largest of South American cats. The first strategy, observation from near a frequently used waterhole/foraging path, was doomed to failure beforehand, as it required silence and sitting still. As jaguars apparently often travel on the roads, simply riding around in the bus was more to the temperament of our group. While we unfortunately failed to see a jaguar, even as a different group had seen five the same week, we were treated to good views of a beautiful ocelot. In addition, we did see the jaguar's massive footprints and heard its deep, throaty roar that made more than one of us relieved that this was as close as it got. Interestingly, playing back a jaguar call we also came to realize how the Rufescent Tiger-heron got its name! Heading back in the dark, we were amazed at the number and density of light-reflecting orbs in every pond or puddle; caymans had been forced to seek any and all remaining pools of water during the drought. During the daytime we saw 50 to 100 individuals basking beside the ponds, while still more floated around with just an eyeball protruding into the water hyacinths. The thought of how hungry and ornery they surely must be packed in there like sardines made us cross those bridges ever so gingerly; that Franklin actually went into a creek to retrieve a dropped flashlight with the awareness of the cayman throng still amazes me. It had been dropped during an (unsuccessful) attempt at dislodging an anaconda found resting just below the bridge boards

We traveled to within 15 miles or so of Porto Jofre, where the Transpantaneira dead-ends. The landscape was here mainly wide-open fields and sloughs (wet season lakes), only intermittently interspersed with brushy thickets or wooded hammocks. The birdlife was magnificent, and I made the association to the East African savanna,

with wading birds replacing the mammals; Sunbittern, Southern Lapwing, Limpkin, Gray-necked Wood-rail, Whistling Heron, Plumbeous-, Buff-necked- and Green Ibis, Jabiru and Southern Screamer were seen everywhere, interspersed with more uncommon species such as Pied Lapwing, Boat-billed Heron, Muscovy Duck, Maguari Stork and the gorgeous Capped Heron. And this is not counting raptors, parrots, or passerines! The area was alive with grassland species as well, with various seedeaters and grassquits flitting in the dry while Black-capped Donacobius skulked closer to water. The electric hues of the Scarlet-headed Blackbird moving in taller reeds shone from afar, and flocks of psittacoids, including Golden-chevroned Parakeet, Golden-collared Macaw, Peach-fronted Parakeet and Orange-winged Parrot, wheeled noisily overhead. None of this compared, however, to the visual and auditory sensation (loud *araa, araa, araa*) of a Hyacinth Macaw family group, including nesting birds. Seen up very close these endangered and largest of all parrots were, well, sensational. In the islands of heavier tree cover we discovered the stunning Great Rufous Woodcreeper and a nesting pair of diminutive Bat Falcons. We were also treated to outstanding looks at dozens of capybara browsing next to caymans, a tapir reluctant to eave its wallow and an otter even more reluctant to leave its prize—a quite dead cayman.

Heading back north we made a brief stop at Pousada Piuval, a huge ranch and the earliest local caterer to eco-tourism that provided the most comfortable accommodations on the trip. On its grounds we again had the fortune to observe for the last time the Hyacinth Macaw, in addition to the ground-dwelling Campo Flicker, Blue-crowned Parakeet, the near-endemic Long-tailed Ground Dove, the magnificent Swallow-tailed Hummingbird, Yellowish Pipit and, thanks to Juan's recorder and persistence, a Cinereous-breasted Spinetail. After just five days in the Pantanal we had tallied some 230 bird species and it was difficult to imagine that things could get better—or muggier—but things could. (*To be concluded next month.*)

Nov. 11 trip, Brickhouse Rd.

Norm Budnitz and Will Cook led a special Sunday a.m. trip in Durham Co. Best birds seen were an immature Cooper's Hawk, a couple of White-crowned Sparrows, a Northern Harrier, an immature Bald Eagle, and a Lincoln's Sparrow (by Will before the rest of us got there). Participants were Barbara Keighton, Roger Rittmaster, Karen and Joe Bearden, Hal (last name?), and Ginger Travis. Many good butterflies were on the wing too.

Happy holidays. Peace. Good birds.