

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

October, 2002

(Vol. XXXI, No. 10)

c/o Ginger Travis

5244 Old Woods Rd.

Hillsborough, NC 27278

October 28 meeting

When: Monday, Oct. 28, 7:15 p.m. for refreshments; 7:30, meeting begins.

Where: The lounge at Binkley Baptist Church in Chapel Hill. Binkley is at the corner of Willow Drive and the 15-501 Bypass (east side of Chapel Hill) next to University Mall.

Program: "*Birds, Life, & Times in Belize.*" From the Maya Mountains to the Cayes, speakers Bill and Eleanor Hasse will discuss birds, birding locations, and natural history in Belize. They will also talk about conservation issues in Belize and the migratory birds that North Carolina and Belize share. Bill is the Coordinator of Tropical Education and the Living Conservatory at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences. Eleanor has been a biology teacher and is currently working on her Ph.D. in Science Education at N.C. State. They met each other in Belize while she was serving in the Peace Corps.

Saturday morning field trips

Trips continue every Saturday morning from now till the Christmas bird counts start (except the Sat. after Thanksgiving, Nov. 30). Meet at Glen Lenox shopping center in Chapel Hill for departure at 7:30 a.m. sharp. Glen Lenox is on the north side of Hwy. 54 just east of the Hwy. 15-501 Bypass. Trips usually are over by noon. Bring binoculars and scope if you have one, wear stout shoes, and be prepared to do some walking. Trips are free; beginners and visitors are definitely welcome! If you want details about the destination of the trip du jour, call Doug Shadwick: 942-0479.

Join the CHBC

Membership benefits include interesting programs, weekly field trips, the newsletter, and camaraderie with local birders at all levels – in a welcoming, inclusive group. Membership dues for one person or family are \$15 per year, or \$10 for a student. Make your check payable to the **Chapel Hill Bird Club**. Mail it to **Ruth Roberson, 38 Stoneridge Place,**

Durham 27705. You can easily join for two or more years – just multiply times the annual dues.

Three upcoming events --

1. David Sibley to sign books

submitted by Karen Bearden

David Sibley will speak and sign books at Quail Ridge Books in Raleigh on Oct. 17 at 7 p.m. This bookstore is in Ridgewood Shopping Center on Wade Avenue – west side of Raleigh and just inside the Beltline – about as conveniently located as possible for those coming from Chapel Hill and Durham. The phone number for the store is 828-1588.

2. Wings over Water

by Ginger Travis

Fifth annual birding festival, Oct. 15-20, with field trips and programs at numerous locations on the Outer Banks and the mainland. Very reasonable program fees and a chance to bird coastal hotspots with N.C.'s expert birders. Unsurpassed paddling opportunities for birders in boats! For info see www.northeast-nc.com/wings/. And there's a political consideration for those who want coastal management that helps our dwindling populations of colonial water birds. To paraphrase John Fussell: Birders will gain a powerful political voice on the coast only when they're seen and heard – and especially when they're seen and heard spending money in the area's motels and restaurants. If it works for the fishermen, hunters and 4-wheelers

3. First Swan Days Birdathon

by Kelly Davis (to Carolinabirds)

All birders, novice to expert, are invited to form teams and compete in the first Swan Days Birdathon to be held Saturday, December 7, 2002, in the Lake Mattamuskeet vicinity, Hyde County, NC. For details and the registration form, go to www.albemarle-nc.com/hyde/events and click on Swan Days, then follow through for a Swan Days program and Birdathon information. All registered teams will be treated to an oyster roast at

Mattamuskeet NWR on Saturday evening and are welcome to participate in the Saturday Evening Program ("Mattamuskeet Nights - Sounds and Sights", a slide show and discussion of native owls and rails followed by an owling excursion - all led by Allen Bryan). Feel free to email me regarding the Birdathon or other Swan Days programs. (Kelly Davis: keldavis@beachlink.com)

Highlight, Sept. 7 field trip: American Golden Plover

by Kent Fiala

The Chapel Hill Bird Club observed an American Golden-Plover at Falls Lake this morning. This bird was in absolutely full breeding plumage, quite a sight. We first saw it at a long distance on the opposite shore across from the Hickory Hill boat ramp. Later we got a much closer view, although still across the channel, by walking out the flats at Panther Creek. We also heard it call a couple of times.

Otherwise shorebirds were pretty scarce. We saw at least 3 White-rumped Sandpipers, also small numbers of Least and a few Spotted Sandpipers, and a few Killdeer. As we arrived at the boat ramp we saw a small and quickly passing warbler flock that included Northern Parula, American Redstart, Black-and-White Warbler and Chestnut-sided Warbler. As we left Panther Creek, a Northern Harrier passed high overhead.

Results, dragonfly field trip, Sept. 8

by Josh Rose, leader

On Sunday, the Chapel Hill Bird Club/Duke Natural History Society dragonfly walk at Occaneechee Mountain State Natural Area had a few birds but no migrants, and nothing more unusual than the pair of Red-shouldered Hawks that soared overhead calling at us. Did have 10 dragonfly, 7 damselfly, and 11 lep species (the latter including a Tersa Sphinx moth). And Greg Dodge spotted a Keeled [Rough?] Green Snake climbing through the bushes right at the end!

CHBC mountain field trip Sept. 14-15, lots of fogbirds!

by Karen Bearden

It was a rainy, foggy, fun, birdy weekend as 18 birders gathered at Mahogany Rock on the Blue Ridge Parkway in N.C. for a Chapel Hill Bird Club weekend in the mountains. Because of the weather we only saw one Turkey Vulture at Mahogany Rock. All of us had great scope views, though, of a beautiful Merlin, perched on top of a tree in a field along the parkway.

At times the trails were quiet, but suddenly a burst of bird activity would appear. Joe and I had 15 warbler species: American Redstart, Tennessee, Hooded, Cape May, Blackburnian, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Worm-eating, Pine, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Northern Parula, and Ovenbird. More warblers were seen by the whole group.

Generally the warbler groups were flocking with talkative chickadees. There also seemed to be a White-breasted Nuthatch around most of the time. The fog turned thicker on Sunday, making it more of a challenge to see the birds. We wished it was sunny so we could enjoy the colors!

Saw 30+ Wild Turkeys in fields or along the side of the road Saturday morning. There were a few Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Wood Thrushes. As we stopped to eat lunch Saturday Doug spotted a Red-eyed Vireo at eye level, giving us all great views--a life bird for a couple birders. We also saw Philadelphia and Blue-headed Vireos. Will does a great Screech Owl call, but at one point, Bruce said, "Quiet!" There was a real Screech Owl calling in the distance!! We left the group late Sunday morning as they were hiking up another trail in the fog, thinking it was time to get home and out of the weather. . . .We returned to Raleigh by 5, before another band of showers hit. . . .Thanks to Doug and Will!

The group: Will Cook (leader), Doug Shadwick (leader), Bruce Young, Jill Froning, Judy Murray, Harriet Sato, Lee Van Malssen, Ted, Loraine, Laura, and Danny Cassidy, Tommy Long (nice man from Goldsboro -- he hooked up with us by accident thinking he was with the hawkwatch group), Rick Payne, Rob and Zolla Tiller, and Joe and Karen Bearden.

Chatham County Fall Count, Sept. 21

by Will Cook, compiler

The 2002 Chatham County (NC) Fall Count on Sept. 21, part of the North American Migration Count, went fairly well despite relatively the high water level, which obliterated all the mudflats that shorebirds had enjoyed for months, and low level of participation.

This year we ended up with 95 species (7.5 below average, the lowest since 1996, the first year of the count) and 3472 birds (179 below average). We had 14 observers in 9 parties (average 22 and 12), 53.8 party-hours (average 77), the lowest level of participation since 1996. On a birds per party-hour basis, however, we had by far the best count ever, with 64.6 birds per party-hour (average 49.5, previous high 57.9).

Two species are new to the count this year -- a Least Flycatcher seen by Will Cook at the

Northeast Creek impoundment and a Clay-colored Sparrow seen by Amalie Lewis Tuffin, Jill Froning, and Shelley Theye at a farm off Big Woods Road. Other goodies include our second records for Philadelphia Vireo (Jeff Phippen and Toni Rexrode), Veery (Cook), Worm-eating Warbler (Cook), and Orchard Oriole (Tuffin, Froning, and Theye).

Despite the low turnout, we still set a number of record highs: Double-crested Cormorant (311), Great Blue Heron (143), Great Egret (282), Blue-winged Teal (47), Ring-billed Gull (3), E. Screech-Owl (6), Whip-poor-will(8), Swainson's Thrush (4), Brown Thrasher (18), and Black-throated Blue Warbler (11). The cormorants, herons, and egrets were all most abundant at the 751 bridge area. The whips were heard by three parties, including an outstanding 6 at the usual spot on Old Hope Valley Farm Road (Doug Shadwick). We tied a record high for Eastern Phoebe (32) thanks to Jill Froning's amazing count of 18 at a farm near the end of the day.

We also had some record lows and first misses: Red-shouldered Hawk (6), Mourning Dove (73), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (1), Yellow-throated Vireo (miss), Wood Thrush (3), A. Robin (14), Yellow-throated Warbler (miss), and Common Grackle (miss). Blackbirds are often very difficult to come by on this count -- we had just 5 total, three cowbirds and one of each oriole.

We had an typical warbler count with 18 species and 136 non-Pine individuals (average 19 and 155). Most common warblers: 204 Pine, 37 C. Yellowthroat, 34 A. Redstart, 15 N. Parula, 14 Black-and-white, 11 Magnolia, and 11 Black-throated Blue.

As expected, all the shorebirds were over at Falls Lake instead of Jordan Lake. For the first time ever, we had only one species (I bet you can guess which one!). The water level at Jordan was 214.0 feet above sea level, which is 2 feet below the level they normally keep it and about the point at which mudflats normally start to appear, but this year, since the water had been much lower and there was a recent rapid rise, all the potential mudflats were covered up in tall sedges and grasses.

Two of the best individual party counts ever were this year -- Will's 72 species and 1222 birds in the 751 area (highest ever) and Amalie, Jill, and Shelley's 61 species and 605 birds in the Big Woods Road area (4th highest ever). The previous record was set in 1999 by Josh Rose's team, which found 71 species and 534 birds in the Ebenezer-Horton's Pond area.

Thanks to all participants! It was a fun count, but I sure would like to see some mudflats (and shorebirds) next year!

Cleaning up Jordan Lake

by Mike Swaim (to Carolinabirds)

Ed. note: The following report should make us all cheer for Mike. This task is herculean. But if, as Mike suggests, each of us takes a trash bag along on our birding trips, maybe Jordan Lake will be cleaner in this lifetime. Mike and the few folks who helped him concentrated on the lake shore accessible from the Wildlife Resources Commission parking lot at the north end of the Hwy 751 bridge. G.T.

Yesterday (Sept. 21), 4 of us showed up for the 2nd of 2 scheduled cleanup dates at the 751 Bridge area of Lake Jordan. Jennifer Glasier (Headwaters Sierra Club), Bobbie Collins-Perry (New Hope Audubon), Faye Bennett, and myself worked for about 3 hrs to collect 33 bags of garbage, a marine battery, a bicycle frame and a tire. We're estimating the combined weight of all this at over 700lbs. The sad truth is that all this was collected in the area of "the point" on the NW shoreline in an area only about 200yds long and 20yds wide. We didn't even bother cleaning up the parking area or the main trails, preferring to concentrate on the exposed areas of shoreline and the party areas just above.

Combined with last week's effort, 6 of us have hauled out 49 bags of bottles and trash weighing an estimated 1200lbs. There is literally tons more trash, but this is a good start. It was discouraging to find fresh trash on the same area that we cleaned last week, but the mere sight of my pickup piled high with trash caused a couple of dove hunters to add a few pieces of trash to the pile. It's going to take an ongoing effort to even bring this area up to minimal standards. If everybody that enjoys this area would just bring out one bag of trash each time they go, it would send a message to the folks who see us come and go.

This area is very easily accessible from Durham, Chapel Hill and Apex. Because it's got a mixture of forests, fields, lake and creeks, it's got a lot of potential for birding, nature observing, fishing etc. It'd be good to see this area transformed from a trash-strewn party spot to an area that we could all be proud of. Many thanks to those who came out to help.

Stunning one-day N.C. hawk count

by Jim Keighton (forwarded to Carolinabirds)

After witnessing 1295 hawks at Mahogany Rock [Blue Ridge Parkway, Alleghany Co.] on September 23 and 1209 on September 24, some would have said the peak is past. But since hawks had been seen by the thousands at some northeastern watch sites only shortly before the weather closed in throughout the eastern U.S. this week, we had hopes for more today. And we did see 190 with lots of variety, including 4 Ospreys, 4 Bald Eagles, 1 Redshoulder and 2 Merlins.

But the really interesting report came from fellow Mahogany Rock hawkwatcher Bill Revis, who was not at Mahogany Rock today, but made a last minute decision to go to his Pores Knob site in the Brushy Mountains, near his home in Moravian Falls off Rt. 16. Bill called me as soon as he got home at 7 pm tonight [Sept. 28] with the following report:

* 5540 hawks coming from the N or NE to SW on NE winds before 12 noon (some in kettles of 1670, 1010, 529, 499, 416, 409)

* 600 between 12-1 pm from NE to SW

* essentially none between 1-4 pm

* 5000 some hawks between 4-6 pm from the E to W (most in kettles of 1300, 903, 700, 532, 400, 332)

For a total of 10,918 hawks at Pores Knob for the day, all counted by one man: what a man! His clicker thumb is completely numb.

Were these hawks stuck in this week's weather out in the Piedmont to the east? Were they trying to come back west to the mountain ridges after the N winds of the morning subsided? Will some of this wave show up at Mahogany Rock (and Bullhead) Sunday on the light SE winds expected for the day? At least we know there still were hawks in the pipeline until late today. . . .

Arizona summer birding

by Magnus Persmark

"It has to be a young Flame-colored!" The bird we were looking at certainly did have the obvious field marks of this species: large, white tertial spots and rather heavy streaking on the back. Still, it didn't seem quite right. The bill was not truly dark and the dark ear patch was awfully hard to pick out. If just the adult male we had been waiting a couple of hours for would now just show up! Not only would it be awesome to see the bird, but also listing this Mexican vagrant would be much less ambiguous.

Bill and I had arrived in Tucson the night before and headed straight for Sierra Vista on the edge of the Huachuca Mountains, one of the famous "desert islands" in Arizona and New Mexico that biogeographically represent an extension of Mexico into the U.S. We originally met at Radnor Lake in Nashville in the early-90's, with Bill arriving by taxi at 6 a.m. after having had his car stolen the first week in town. As both of us had since moved away, we now kept up in part by hitting a good birding spot once a year or so. Miller Canyon seemed as good a place as any, and on this first morning in the Huachucas we had already seen several specialty birds: Grace's Warbler, the spectacularly contrasty Red-faced Warbler and Greater Peewee. As we only had four days to bird we had had to choose the itinerary rather carefully to get the most variety with the least amount of driving. We had for this reason

decided to focus on the Huachucas and the Patagonia area. The Huachuca canyons are legendary for hosting Mexican strays and the reason for our hike up Miller Canyon was the presence for a few weeks of a male Flame-colored Tanager. About a dozen other birders had hiked up to the "stake-out spot" (an area of fruiting shrubs between evergreens) as well, but only Bill and I lingered at this point.

The immature, apparent Flame-colored Tanager had been moving between the shrubbery and the spruce canopy, on occasion seemingly joined by a female Western Tanager. I was watching the young bird forage on berries as another adult bird appeared in my peripheral view. It took me about a millisecond to realize that the male Flame-colored had joined the feeding group and Bill and I just sat back in that special awe you get while observing a really good bird for the first time. We later learned that "Mr. Flame" had paired with a Western female; no wonder that their hybrid offspring didn't seem quite right!

More relaxed coming down, we enjoyed the Beatty's "hummingbird zoo" at the bottom of the canyon. The Beatty family maintains about a dozen thronged feeders at the edge of their property for public enjoyment, and theirs are perhaps the most visited, together with those in the Nature Conservancy's Ramsey Canyon and the Patons' in Patagonia. Despite the feeding frenzy we didn't linger very long; there were bigger fish to fry this morning. We had been granted access to a private home nearby where a Plain-capped Starthroat made regular appearances. A little while later we were fairly floating on air, having ticked off yet another Mexican stray, together with Broad-billed, Lucifer, Costa's, Magnificent, and several other hummer species. August is perhaps the best month to rack up a large number of hummingbirds in southeastern Arizona, and the diversity was simply stunning. A day later in the famous Ramsey Canyon, we enjoyed perfect views of White-eared and Blue-throated Hummingbird at the feeders. Further up that canyon we were shown the nest of a Berylline Hummingbird, yet another rare stray from south of the border. The young were still in the nest and so it was just a matter of time before mom or dad would show up—just glue the binocs to the eyes. The adult Berylline did appear, but the highlight that afternoon was not a hummingbird. It was the astonishment of lowering those glued binocs to find [CHBC member and Chapel Hill birder] Judy Murray with friends looking at the same nest! The birding world is a small one, indeed, and not a bad one either; the Berylline Hummingbird would be one of 15 hummer species seen on this trip, equivalent to the number ever observed in Arizona.

Just east of the Huachuca Mountains the San Pedro River draws a thin, verdant line through the

generally parched Sonoran desert. It is preserved as a riparian conservation area, the most extensive in the Southwest. Among the 250-odd bird species observed at San Pedro is the largest population of Gray Hawk in the US; we saw one individual swooping low over mesquite brush away from the riparian corridor. San Pedro was perhaps a little slower than expected, although a Violet-crowned Hummingbird was a nice surprise and Gila Woodpeckers were abundant in the cottonwoods and shrubs. However, the adjoining grasslands presented outstanding opportunities to compare Western and Cassin's Kingbird up close, and no matter that Vermilion Flycatchers were dime-a-dozen, these gems never cease to take your breath away. However, what we had really hoped for was sparrows that are active during the summer monsoon, which represents southeastern Arizona's second breeding season for two sought-after species—Cassin's and Botteri's. As luck would have it, we found both and, following voice identification, felt much more comfortable in discerning plumage differences. Other exciting birds of the grasslands were Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and Curve-billed and Crissal Thrasher. We happened on the latter through sheer fluke while stopping at the roadside. The last Huachuca birding was in the canyons on Fort Huachuca, where a couple of soaring Zone-tailed Hawks greeted us upon entry. We missed Spotted Owl in Scheelite Canyon and Elegant Trogon in Garden Canyon and saw only a single bird in Sawmill Canyon. But since this was a Buff-breasted Flycatcher, we didn't feel too disappointed!

The drive east from the Huachucas to Patagonia was simply marvelous. The Sonoran rolling grasslands, hills and mountains were vibrantly alive and green, having been fed by the summer monsoon rains. Blooming cacti seemed strangely misplaced in this lush surrounding, but having been through the area several times I knew that the verdancy would soon be replaced by earth tones of yellow brown and gray. Strange that just a bit to the north forests had been scorched by devastating wildfires but a few weeks earlier.

After a stop at the Patons' back yard hummingbird feeders (the most reliable place in the U.S. for the Violet-crowned), replete with awning, field guides and water for hot birders, we headed straight for the rest stop. The Patagonia rest stop is legendary in birding circles, at least as rests stops go, as a hot spot for a number of rare Southwestern species. However, while we had had reasonably good fortune seeing flycatchers in the Huachucas, the entire Patagonia area was somewhat disappointing. The Rose-breasted Becards, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulets and Brown-crested Flycatchers that serve as this little sleepy town's claim to fame were conspicuous by their silence, if not absence.

Nevertheless, a nest of Thick-billed Kingbirds and a Tropical Kingbird at nearby Kino Springs were still pretty good substitutes. As was the odd eatery, the Velvet Elvis, that in addition to Elvis paraphernalia sported rather insipid airbrushed portraits of Native American greats. Great pizza, though.

As this was Bill's first foray to the interior West, there were still some "common" character birds missing from our trip list, and we therefore briefly headed out Harshaw Road the last morning before returning to Tucson (we had 11 o'clock flights to catch...). We soon spished up a Rufous-crowned Sparrow and a gorgeous Varied Bunting, but these still didn't quite fit the bill of paragon desert birds. Then, as we were turning the car around, a sound from the bluffs high above the gravel road made me pause for a second. And up there in perfect silhouette was a Greater Roadrunner greeting the dawn and us, sort of beckoning us to come back.

Which we will.

P3 for Swainson's Warbler and Red-cockaded Woodpecker

map and notes submitted by Jeff Lewis

condensed by Ginger Travis

A new, little-known birding location is **Palmetto Peartree Preserve** in Tyrrell County. If you're headed east toward the Outer Banks, it's on the north side of Hwy. 64 shortly before you cross the Alligator River. It's a can't-miss location for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, and it has Swainson's Warblers in spring. Bald Eagles also nest on the preserve. Palmetto Peartree is too new to be well-marked on the ground, so the map (last page) is probably essential. A few notable spots:

easiest Red-cockaded Woodpecker spot: At stoplight in Columbia, set your odometer to 0. Go 14 miles east on Hwy. 64. You should see an orange gate on the left (north side) close to highway. Park. Walk up trail inside gate 200 yards to marked RCW nest trees. (Gate is 3.1 miles west of Alligator River.) Old "posted" sign on pole by gate predates preserve.

SR 1220, Pot Licker Road, and adjacent gated roads. Start at east end of SR 1220 and bird the first 0.7 mile. Turn right and go 0.3 mile. Park at one of two orange gates (don't block gates). Walk either gated road, to east or west. On west road, Red-cockaded Woodpecker nest trees will be found after half a mile. Early morning is best for seeing the RCWs.

East end of SR 1220 at intersection with SR 1209. Slightly east of the intersection, a Swainson's Warbler was heard singing in spring 2002. On south side of intersection are some RCW nest trees. And 0.3 mile east of the intersection, on SR 1209, is good for Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers in season.

Gate at east end of SR 1223, Goat Neck Rd., another singing Swainson's Warbler spot.

Palmetto Peartree Preserve
Tyrrell County, North Carolina

DRAFT

Prepared by Will Allen
March 26th, 2001



The
Conservation
Fund

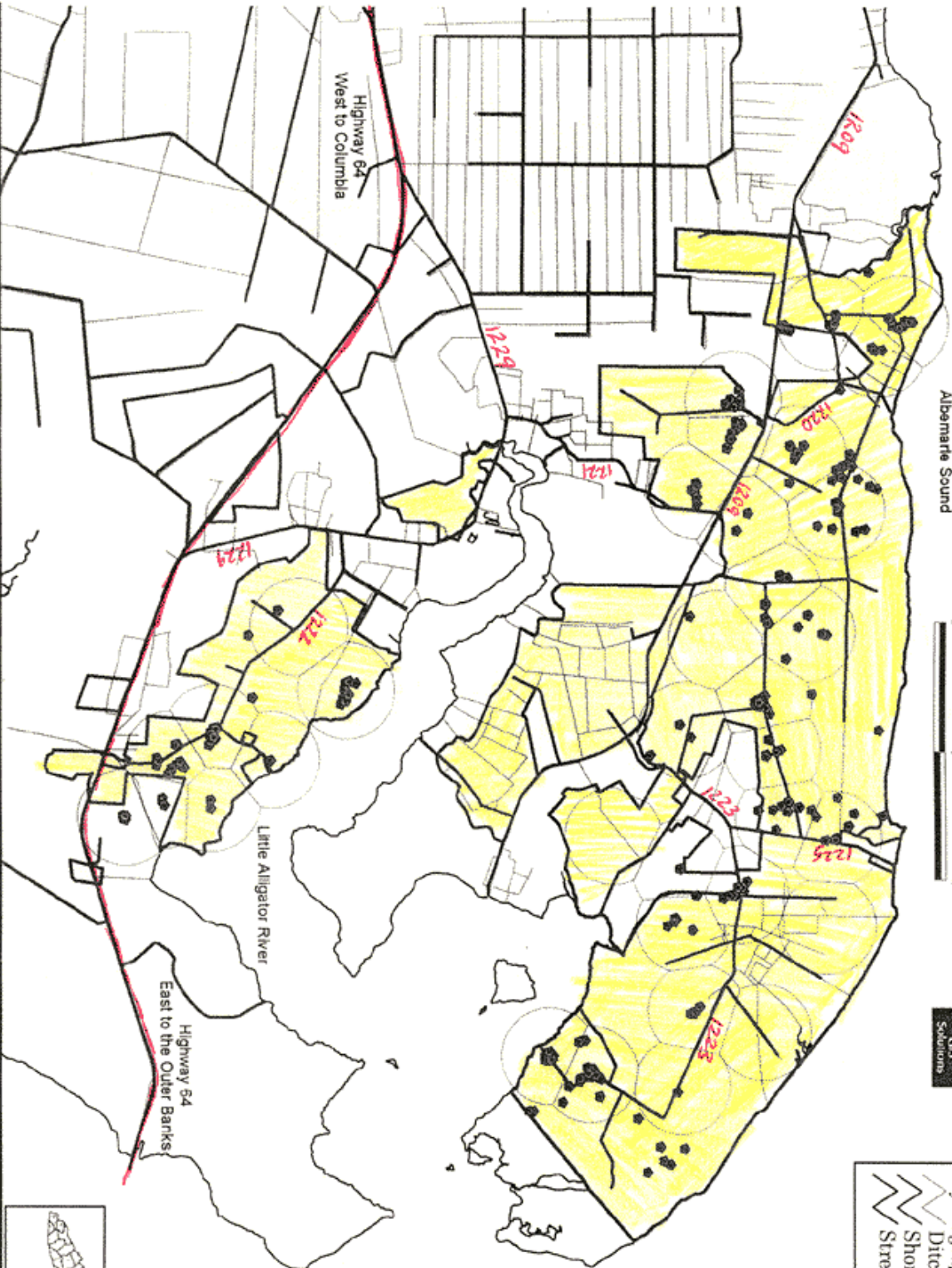


Albemarle Sound



- LEGEND**
- Property Boundary
 - RCW Clusters
 - RCW Cavity Trees
 - Roads
 - Hydrography
 - Ditch or Canal
 - Shoreline
 - Stream

GIS Data Sources:
Golden Simpson
J. Carter & Associates
US Geological Survey
Canal Forest Resource
UTM Projection Zone 18
NAD83 Datum, meters



Alligator River
Intercastal Waterway



Location Map

5.3 miles from Columbia to 1229 (West end)

4.9 miles from Alligator River west to 1229 (East end)