

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

February, 2003

(Vol. XXXII, No. 2)

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

February meeting

When: Monday, Feb. 24, 7:15 refreshments; 7:30 meeting begins.

Where: The lounge, Binkley Baptist Church, corner of 15-501 Bypass and Willow Drive, Chapel Hill (next to University Mall).

Program: "Colonial Nesting Birds"

Presenter: **Dr. Lynn Moseley**, professor and chair of the Biology Department at Guilford College in Greensboro, has a Ph.D. in zoology, with a specialization in animal behavior from UNC-Chapel Hill. Her program on "Colonial Nesting Birds" will describe the advantages and the challenges of coloniality. She will also give examples of different groups of birds that exhibit colonial nesting, and discuss the factors that select for this rather unusual type of social behavior. See you there!

Sat. a.m. field trips continue

Trips leave at 7:30 a.m. sharp from Glen Lennox shopping center on the north side of Hwy. 54 just east of the Hwy 15-501 Bypass. Trips are free, and all are welcome, including beginners, whether club members or not. Call **Doug Shadwick** if you need details of the destination: **942-0479**. Trips are over by noon.

Join, renew, you know what to do!

If your mailing label has "01/03" in the upper right corner, your membership renewal date is just past. Please renew. Membership is \$15 per year for individuals and families, \$10 for students. Make your check to Chapel Hill Bird Club. Send it to our treasurer Ruth Roberson, 38 Stoneridge Place, Durham 27705. Multi-year renewals are easy – just multiply the desired number of years times \$15. Need a form? Use this.

MY NAME:

MY MAILING ADDRESS:

MY PHONE NO. & EMAIL ADDRESS:

Lapland Longspur Alert

compiled from Carolinabirds

The longspurs first seen by Derb Carter on Dec. 22 have been relocated several times since in fields around the intersection of Rocky Ridge Rd. and Dairyland Rd. – most often but not always in the recently plowed field north of Dairyland and across from the ice cream store. Recent observers have found the longspurs keeping company with a big flock of pipits. So find the pipits . . . but it's still hit or miss, and many tries and a little luck may be required.

Ross's Goose at Maple View, Anilorac

compiled from Carolinabirds

On Feb. 1, Jeff Phippen spotted a white goose in the air with a flock of Canadas near Maple View Farm on Dairyland Rd., home of the longspurs. On Feb. 2, Will Cook and Derb Carter found the white goose on a private pond at Maple View (they had permission to go there). It was a Ross's Goose, the county's first recorded one. Will got a picture. Go to this address and scroll down to the listing for Ross's: www.duke.edu/~cwcook/pix. The goose was later seen by Jill Froning at Anilorac Farm, about a mile farther west on Dairyland Rd. Jill could see the goose at the pond behind the farmhouse from her vantage point on the public road shoulder. (Anilorac Farm is 6.2 miles west of Calvander -- intersection of Old Hwy. 86 and Dairyland Rd.) On Feb. 6 Shantanu Phukan saw the Ross's Goose feeding in the stubble field opposite the main entrance to Maple View Farm. This bird moves around a lot. Drive the roads and look for a small white goose among the Canadas!

White-winged Scoters at Crabtree

compiled from Carolinabirds

On Jan. 26 Steve Shultz reported a pair of White-winged Scoters at Lake Crabtree County Park (Wake Co.) and several other CHBC members posted their sightings of the scoters plus other species, including Greater Scaup. Sandy Cash reported also seeing Redheads and Canvasbacks. Rob Gluck saw about 70 Hooded Mergansers. Ricky Davis saw a Common Goldeneye. The intense cold may have concentrated ducks on this lake, but perhaps a few good ones will linger through warmer days.

The main entrance to Lake Crabtree is off Aviation Parkway, which intersects I-40. There's also an unofficial back way off Weston Rd., where observers have gotten good looks. For example, the Beardens parked in the NC Bar Center parking lot, and Rob Gluck parked at the Pharamnet Building, formerly an IBM building, and bushwhacked to the lakeshore.

Jan. 11 field trip report: Old Squaw!

by Mike Swaim

As always, this morning's Chapel Hill Bird Club outing proved to be quite interesting and enjoyable. While riding from Farrington Bridge to Ebenezer Pt. my companions and I were discussing what we'd like to see. As we passed the settling ponds before reaching Ebenezer Pt. I mentioned that I'd like to see an Old Squaw (Long-Tailed Duck). This elicited a chuckle from Bruce and Jill who gently informed me that such birds were usually found on more open water than the settling ponds. One thing about being a beginner is you never know just how stupid things that you might say really are, until you see other people's reactions to them. So, I learned something.

Well, as luck would have it, just a few moments after setting up our scopes on the beach area of Ebenezer Pt., Doug Shadwick (who didn't even know about my conversation with Bruce and Jill) identified a winter plumage male Old Squaw (Long-Tailed Duck) sitting in the waves hundreds of yards offshore. Sure enough, close inspection revealed a very white duck with noticeable black cheek and black breast. At one point I thought that I saw an orangish duck beak on the bird. Others concurred. I never did see the long tail, and no amount of wishing seemed to work to bring the bird in closer.

Doug suggested that this sighting was worth posting here. What I would suggest is that these little Sat. morning CHBC fieldtrips are really worth going on. I've been tagging along on as many of these as I possibly could for about 9 months, and I can say that for a beginning birder, there's very little that compares to regularly going afield with experts who can pick "the odd bird" out of the field and point out the field markings that are so crucial. By going out with this and other groups, I've been introduced to species that I wouldn't have even noticed and have learned a great many good places to go looking that I otherwise wouldn't have known about. If you've got a group that regularly goes out in your area, I'd strongly suggest attending their fieldtrips when possible. I've learned more by doing that, than I ever would've on my own.

Other birds seen on today's outing included: Lesser Scaup, Horned Grebes, Pie-billed Grebes, Brown-headed Nuthatches (We got a really good look at several of these very close to the road.), Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hermit Thrushes, Herring

Gulls (including a 1st year that was oddly lethargic, close in on the beach), Ring-billed Gulls, Bonaparte's Gulls, cormorants, Song Sparrow, Killdeer, Bufflehead ducks (several of these at the settlement ponds, as usual), Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, [Eastern] Bluebird.

Last week the highlight of the trip for me was getting to scope several Common Snipe on the grassy area of Lake Crabtree, just days after asking this group about possibly seeing one in flight. We also saw a Harrier stalling in flight over a field at the airport on that trip. Who knows what we'll see next, but I'm sure we'll have fun.

CHBC coastal weekend trip report (great birds!)

by Steve Shultz

The intrepid birders joining the Chapel Hill Bird Club's annual MLK weekend [Jan. 18-20] eastern NC trip led by Doug Shadwick enjoyed the nice (but a bit chilly) weather and found or relocated some nice birds over the 3-day weekend. I joined the group Sunday morning at the Swan Quarter ferry landing. The group had already done Mattamuskeet locating the Western Kingbird, Baltimore Orioles, and a sleepy little Eastern Screech Owl hanging out in a wood duck box.

The ferry trip was pleasant with the wind following the boat. Pamlico Sound produced many, many scoters, probably thousands of surf and a few hundred black. We also spotted a few Oldsquaw (I know, I know, you want me to say Long-tailed Duck. I refuse). After lunch at Howard's Pub on Ocracoke we hit the point at Cape Hatteras where a few Lesser Black-backed Gulls (including a rather dark backed individual, close to the same mantle color as the adjacent GBBG's) were highlights.

After dinner and a night in Manteo, we birded Pea Island this morning. Best bird was an American Bittern Doug flushed from the little turtle pond behind the restrooms. On to Oregon Inlet where we discovered two female plumaged HARLEQUIN DUCKS swimming out from under the bridge pilings at the south end of Bonner Bridge. The birds crossed the "bay" in front of the old Coast Guard slips and hung around the groin a bit before flying back to the bridge pilings. Check the bridge pilings from the catwalks or the rocks along the groin for these birds.

Bodie Island added some shorebirds including Long-billed Dowitcher chattering away in a feeding flock just a few yards away.

The trip ended at Alligator River NWR where the target was Rough-legged Hawk. After seeing Bald Eagles, dozens of Red-tails and Harriers, and dodging a steam roller and bulldozer, a decent sized hawk with a slight dihedral and two "landing light" white spots on the leading edge of the wings appeared. Yep, the ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, a

lifer for some and state bird for others. In fact I knocked off 3 state birds in 3 hours! Kinda nice.

We had a great time, so mark your calendar for next year and if you haven't already, join the CHBC!

In-town birding: Horace Williams Tract

by Rob Gluck

Ed. note: Rob Gluck has done a lot of birding in Chapel Hill at places unfamiliar to many of us, including the Horace Williams tract and the Bolin Creek greenway. I asked him to write up these destinations so others can explore them. Here's one. Next month we'll run another. Thanks, Rob!

The Horace Williams Tract is a large (1000 acre) parcel of University-owned land in central Chapel Hill. It includes the Chapel Hill Airport and several municipal buildings including the Animal Protection Society. The portion running north of these facilities to Homestead Rd., and bordered on the east and west by Airport Rd. and Seawell School Rd. is an area of once-good bird habitat which UNC intends to develop (and has already altered).

To reach the area I usually park near the (often-gated) entrance at the end of Municipal Dr. which comes off Airport Rd. opposite Piney Mtn. Rd. (but one can also enter the area from points off Seawell School Rd.). Entering the gate puts one on a dirt road that makes a 2-mile loop encircling the tract. I should point out that the University discourages "trespassing" over certain parts of the tract due to soil and groundwater contamination from past dumping (...uhhh, that's never stopped me!). About a half mile northwest of the entrance is a pond which usually only yields common species (GB. Herons, Green Herons, Mallards, Kingfisher, C. Geese) -- a University gate normally blocks direct access to this beaver-inhabited pond but the gate can be bypassed.

The 2-mile loop itself has several side trails that usually lead to roadways or residential areas. Besides the pond, the tract contains a mix of pines, hardwoods, shrubs, hedges, brushy and grassy areas. Possible birds of note include: all our local hawks and woodpeckers, buntings, goldfinch, chats, grosbeaks, a few migrant warblers, wrens, and large numbers of sparrows. A herd of deer roam the area as well, and prior to UNC's encroachment I would see occasional foxes, woodchuck, and muskrat (in the middle of Chapel Hill, no less!) but not in recent years.

Mini-breeding bird surveys are just around the corner!

by Haven Wiley

Yesterday [Jan. 26] my class in Avian Biology toured Jordan Lake on a chilly, overcast day. Thin ice covered much of the upper reaches of the lake. Great Blue Herons perched on the edges of the sheets

of ice to fish -- except for one poor bird who slipped, slid into the water, and had to scramble unceremoniously back onto the ice. In open water along the edges of the lake, congregations of Hooded Mergansers waited nervously until they could return to the bottomlands once the ice had gone.

Despite all the signs of winter, many birds knew that spring was around the corner. We heard singing Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, and Carolina Wrens. It was a marvel that these birds had not only survived the winter's ice storms and snow but, on this frozen day, had a bright enough outlook to sing.

We also ran into Judy Murray -- and seeing her reminded me that it will soon be time for our local Mini-Breeding Bird Surveys once again. That got me to thinking about whether our surveys could tell us how well our resident birds can survive a harsh winter.

Mini-Breeding Bird Surveys (MBBSs) are a group effort by many local birders. All the results are on our web site (<http://www.unc.edu/~rhwiley/mbbs>). By now we have completed four years of MBBSs for Orange County, three years for Chatham, and one year for Durham. Our procedures follow those of the National BBS in general, except that we target one county at a time. Each county has 8-14 routes, each ten miles long with stops every half mile. At each stop an observer counts all birds heard or seen within three minutes (some more details are explained on the web site).

My graduate students working at Mason Farm Biological Reserve vividly remember January 2000, when snow covered the ground for over a week. Afterwards a good one-third of our banded Carolina Wrens were never seen again. Then the following summer only half as many one-year-old Northern Cardinals held territories as in other years. Did the January snow have such an impact elsewhere?

A look at the Orange County MBBS reveals that this storm did in fact have similar effects throughout the county. Between the summers of 1999 and 2000, the total numbers of Carolina Wrens on MBBSs dropped from 186 to 133. Northern Cardinals and Field Sparrows also appear to have taken a hit. Field Sparrows fell from 37 to 14. All of these species feed on the ground, so prolonged snow cover is a do-or-die situation for them. House Finches also plummeted between 1999 and 2000, down from 48 to 28, but perhaps for a different reason. This was about the time the infections with mycoplasma were reaching a peak in House Finches. Other species that often seem sensitive to harsh winters did all right that year. In particular, Eastern Bluebirds and Tufted Titmice fared well.

Our MBBSs should reveal other important trends in our local populations of birds too. Are our neotropical migrants decreasing? Is the fragmentation of our forests for subdivisions

affecting our forest-interior species? Is the loss of hayfields affecting our grassland species? In a quick look at some species that depend on forests in Orange County, it is gratifying to see that Wood Thrushes and both tanagers are doing just fine so far.

In contrast, those that depend on hayfields are a cause for concern. The Grasshopper Sparrow, sparsely although widely distributed in the county, has steadily decreased in the past four years. Except for the MBBS, it is entirely plausible that this quintessentially unobtrusive sparrow could disappear from the county's avifauna without a notice. In contrast, the Eastern Meadowlark, with its wild carolling on spring mornings, would surely be missed by lots of folks. Yet the MBBSs of the past four years suggest that we should prepare ourselves for just this possibility. Our counts for meadowlarks are alarming: down from 75 to 34, 36, and 25!

Chatham County, with three years of surveys, seems not to be losing its meadowlarks the way Orange County is, but we have to recognize that three -- or even four -- years is not yet enough to draw definitive conclusions. Nevertheless, we can already see how MBBSs are likely to change our perceptions -- and the perceptions of many other citizens -- of our local populations of birds.

Besides, while I was stomping my feet in the cold on the banks of Jordan Lake yesterday, it was heartening to think about those meadowlarks singing on a warm morning in June. I can't wait! If you can identify birds by ear and want to volunteer to help with an MBBS, contact Ginger Travis (Orange Co.), Marsha Stephens (Chatham Co.), or Patsy Bailey (Durham Co.) -- contact info is on the web page.

Chapel Hill CBC

by Will Cook

The 72nd Chapel Hill Christmas Bird Count, held on Sunday, 22 December 2002, was one of our best, above average for both species and individuals. This year's 94 species is well above the ten-year average 84, while the 14577 individuals is just slightly above the average of 13819. The totals this year are quite similar to 2000, our best count in many years (94 species, 14652 birds). We were helped by an above-average 147.5 party-hours (average 133), but the number of birds per party-hour was a little below normal 99 (average 105).

Without a doubt, the birds of the count were the two Lapland Longspurs that Derb Carter found in the freshly plowed field across from the Mapleview Farm dairy store on Dairyland Road west of Chapel Hill. Not only are these the first for a Chapel Hill count, they're also the first for Orange County, as far as I know. Derb's assigned count area was on the south side of Dairyland Road - I'm glad he poached a few good birds on the north side! Fish Crow is also a new bird for the count, though this one's not unexpected since they're found regularly on the neighboring Raleigh and Falls Lake counts. Ginger

Travis heard the "uh-oh" call of a Fish Crow near Finley Golf Course. Three other boldface birds were not firsts for the count. Jeff Phippen and Toni Rexrode found a male Black-and-white Warbler for our second count record. They saw it in a pine forest, along with a mixed flock that also included a Blue-headed Vireo, after enduring a long, birdless hike. Brian Bockhahn had good luck at the wastewater plant on Farrington Road in Durham, finding our third Least Sandpipers (2). Covering the field north of Morgan Creek (opposite the main area of Mason Farm), Jerome Brewster and I found an Orange-crowned Warbler in the weeds, the third for the count.

Other good finds include a Northern Harrier at Mapleview Farm (Derb Carter), our first since 1995, our 5th count record of Northern Shovelers at Mapleview (Derb Carter, Pam Timmons, and Perry Haaland), our first Palm Warbler since 1992 (Brian Bockhahn), and Shelley Theye's backyard Baltimore Oriole. Tantalizingly close to the count circle (less than a mile outside) was Ginger Travis's adult male Calliope Hummingbird, which Susan Campbell banded earlier in the month.

We set a few record highs: an astounding 216 Black Vultures (nearly twice the previous record of 129 in 1977), 618 Canada Geese (590 in 1998), 5 Northern Shovelers (3 in 1990), 124 Brown-headed Nuthatches (95 in 2001), 434 Carolina Wrens (368 in 1991), and 43 Winter Wrens (39 in 1999 and 2001). American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, and American Goldfinch were also well above average, though not near a record.

We found only 9 Red-headed Woodpeckers this year, which seems very low compared to the record 87 found in both 2000 and 2001. However, the average for the three years before that is just 7.7. The 451 European Starlings is about half the average, the lowest count since 1985.

Teams with highest totals: Derb Carter had an outstanding day, turning in the highest species total with 61 (1147 individuals), adding Lapland Longspur, Northern Harrier, and Brown-headed Cowbird to the overall count. The team of Jeff Phippen and Toni Rexrode (with a reporter and photographer tagging along) turned in the highest number of birds, with a total of 1221 (in 51 species). Their most abundant bird was Cedar Waxwing (130), though on the overall count American Robin was #1 with 1267, followed by Dark-eyed Junco (1026) and White-throated Sparrow (994).

Weather: Low 31 F, high 63 F, wind west 0-5 mph, partly cloudy-clear, no precipitation, water open. Effort: 41 observers in 23 field parties, 147.5 party hours (117 by foot, 30.5 by car), 404.5 party miles (103.5 by foot, 301 by car), 5.5 hours and 14.5 miles owling, 7 people and 20 hours watching feeders.

Full count results are on the last two pages here and online at the Christmas Bird Count web site:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/> Thanks to everyone who helped make this an excellent count!

Falls Lake CBC

by Brian Bockhahn

The Falls Lake CBC was held on December 28, 2002. With a high of 25 participants we had a near low of 88 species were recorded on count day. Recent warm temps along with an increase in duck hunting pressure resulted in low numbers of waterfowl, and where were the Blackbirds?

Highlights were a first count MERLIN and two Loggerhead Shrike (new to count day). Other good finds were 22 Palm Warbler, 4 Blue-headed Vireo from 3 parties and 1 Gray Catbird. Becoming regular were 1 Fish Crow, 3 Lesser and 4 Greater Black-backed Gulls. Irruptives were represented by only 1 Purple Finch, 1 Red-breasted Nuthatch and 2 Pine Siskin.

Count week were Green-winged Teal and Barred Owl (Too many cars on the road to hear one on count day!!!!)

Misses were Pintail, Canvasback, Scaup, RB Merganser, N Harrier, Am Coot, House Wren, all Blackbirds!, and I'm proud to say House Sparrow.

I'm also proud to say that after three years missed, 2 Northern Bobwhite were reported.

As of now Highway 50 boat ramps and Holly Point Campground are open. The other five state park areas are closed and posted NO TRESPASSING (many hazards still). All WRC (Wildlife Resources Commission) boat ramps and lands are open. The dam area (COE: Corps of Engineers) and Blue Jay Point County Park are open.

Ed. note: If you want to find out if certain areas of Falls Lake have reopened, call 676-1027.

Jordan Lake CBC

by Norm Budnitz

The Jordan Lake (NC) Christmas Bird Count was on December 29, 2002, a cold, clear, beautiful winter day. Our counters identified 90 species, a bit below our average of 93 for the preceding ten years. Our total of 27,162 individual birds was a new record, and more than 8,000 higher than our 10-year average of 18,830. Cormorants and gulls were the responsible species (see below). We had 51 birders (average: 61) in 25 parties (average: 22.5) who counted for 159 party-hours (a new high, average: 139). That's approximately 171 birds per party hour, a new record (average: 135). [At our lunchtime countdown, some folks indicated a feeling that they were seeing fewer birds overall compared to recent years. However, if the above numbers were doctored a bit (by substituting average numbers of cormorants and gulls), our total count would have been about 17,600 birds, just 1,200 below average. And if we look solely at passerines, we counted 8,900 vs. our average of about 10,200. So passerines were down

about 10%. But this is well within normal fluctuations for our count, and it would suggest that nothing unusual was going on. (Having all the data on a spreadsheet lets me 'play' with the numbers this way and ask "What if . . ." questions.)]

So what about those cormorants and gulls? The 2,103 Double-crested Cormorants was almost twice the number seen last year (1,157); and that had been a new record! Note that this new record stands even after your brutal compiler ruthlessly eliminated some 1,200 cormorants considered to be overlaps! Brian Bockhahn could have set the new record by himself with his estimate of 1620 cormorants.

At the lunchtime countdown, Tom and Janet Krakauer rather sheepishly reported seeing about 12,000 Ring-billed Gulls. They made their estimate at first light from Ebenezer Point, while the gulls were still sitting on the water before dispersing around the lake and to the local landfills and grocery store parking lots. Needless to say, your skeptical compiler raised his eyebrows. However, in the interest of fairness (and since he knows the Krakauers to be honest and reasonable folk), the compiler went to Ebenezer Point at 4:00 P.M. to make his own estimate. Lo and behold, he humbly arrived at the same estimate of 12,000 birds, either sitting on the water or flying about in the fading light of day! (Sitting off to the side of the mass of Ring-billed Gulls were four Great Black-backed Gulls. This was only the second record of this species for our count--an added bonus for the cautious compiler.)

So what else was new? Will Cook identified our first Lesser Black-backed Gull. Lessers have been seen fairly regularly in recent winters in the Raleigh area, so perhaps it was just a matter of time. But leave it to Will to actually make the ID with the bird in flight. Brian Bockhahn found a Forster's Tern, the second record of this species for our count. And Bobbie Collins-Perry and George and Miao-Fang Altshuller found a Green Heron, our third count record. Another unusual sighting was made by Andy Upshaw and Rouse Wilson. They found 30 Wilson's Snipe right where they should be in a very wet field with a creek running through it. (Note the name change back to Wilson's Snipe from Common Snipe.)

Some other high numbers: Red-shouldered Hawks 33 (previous high was 23); Red-bellied Woodpeckers 169 (164); Hairy Woodpeckers 23 (21); Pileated Woodpeckers 35 (34); White-breasted Nuthatches 48 (46); and Brown-headed Nuthatches 149 (116).

Misses for the year? Well, we always have a few. No Turkeys, Woodcock, or Eastern Screech-Owls. No Shrikes, Pipits, or Rusty Blackbirds. It surely doesn't seem to be a "finch year." Our numbers: 6 Purple Finches, 12 Evening Grosbeaks, and no Pine Siskins. And we continue to have low numbers of some species: American Kestrels 3;

Northern Bobwhites 5. We also had rather low numbers of Mourning Doves 159 (our fewest since 1984) and Common Grackles 3 (though we've had single-digit counts in the past decade). Was there a West Nile virus effect on raptors or corvids? Bald Eagles 9 (10-year average: 8.4); Red-shoulders 33 (19.2); Red-tails 40 (37.9); Blue Jays 207 (217.4); American Crows 542 (616.7). Our numbers don't indicate any effect.

For the record: We had 51 birders in 25 parties. They put in 159 party hours (128 on foot, 27.5 by car, 3.5 by bicycle), 350 miles (91 on foot, 249 by car, 10 by bicycle), and 6 hours and 11 miles owling. The weather was cold (26F to 58F) with winds calm to light and variable. The sky was mostly clear, with short periods of scattered clouds. There was no precipitation and no significant ice coverage.

Volunteers needed: Duke Forest Bird Survey

by Bobbie Collins-Perry

Experienced birders are needed to lead teams to count birds for a new project in Duke Forest. The goal is to survey the Durham, Korstian, Blackwood, and possibly the Eno/Hillsborough tracts four times a year to census Spring and Fall migrants and breeding and winter residents. The counts will be run similarly to Christmas Bird Counts. Target dates for the counts are the first week of May, the third week of June, the third week of September, and the first week of February. A compiler is also needed. Work includes collecting and verifying data from all the teams and entering the data into a database or spreadsheet. Data from the counts will be archived by Duke Forest. One long-term goal of the project is to develop a Bird Atlas of the Duke Forest!

The project is being headed up by Mike Burke, Forestry Technician at Duke University and assisted by volunteers Jeff Pippen, Will Cook, and myself. Please contact me at bobbiecp@yahoo.com or 403-8345, if you would like to volunteer!

-- Bobbie Collins-Perry, New Hope Audubon Society member and Duke Forest volunteer

In brief

by G.T., mostly gleaned from Carolinabirds

N.C. mountains: CHBC member James Coman of Alleghany Co. reports very low numbers of species and individuals before count week and on CBCs in northwest NC and southwest Virginia. However, some odd species did turn up there this winter. CHBC member Jim Keighton saw a Black Phoebe on Dec. 4 (near Sparta). A Shiny Cowbird was reported at a feeder near Independence, Va. And James Coman reported that on his Alleghany Co. farm, a couple of small, white-bellied terns flew over him – not conclusively identified but possibly either Common or Forster's.

Injured Long-eared Owl in Raleigh: (Steve Stone, executive director of the American Wildlife Refuge)

“Date found: January 8, 2003. Time Injured: approx. 2 p.m. Location: Off Annapolis Drive, near the intersection of Wade Avenue and Oberlin Road. Circumstances: Hit the second floor mirrored plate glass window of the Tobacco Cooperative Building. Was unable to stand, perch, or fly. . . . It is doing very well and we expect a full recovery. Unfortunately, with the severe eye damage, it will most likely become a permanent resident of the refuge.”

Chapel Hill Long-eared Owl?: (Helmut Mueller) “I think that I may have seen a Long-ear flying across the bypass near Smith Level Road in Chapel Hill yesterday [Jan. 15] at dusk. I only got a very instantaneous look at it, but it had the butterfly-like flight of an Asio.”

Cooper's Hawk: (Carol Williamson) “On Saturday afternoon [Jan. 11], after a hike on the Duke Forest Trail, my son, daughter-in-law, and I returned home (northwest Durham). As we approached my driveway, my son exclaimed, ‘What is that!?’ On the ice-storm-debris woodpile beside my neighbor's driveway, sat a large bird. We stopped the car and watched. The bird turned around, sat facing us, then took off, flying just in front of us. I realized then it was a Cooper's hawk. Guess it had been waiting for an afternoon snack to come out of the woodpile. Nice yard bird for my new 2003 list (which now numbers 24 species).”

Orange Co. Calliope: (Ginger Travis) The adult male Calliope Hummingbird that appeared in my yard Nov. 7 was banded by Susan Campbell on Dec. 19. This tiny creature weighed 2.63 grams. I put out a warm feeder every morning at first light. It survived many nights in the 20s and three nights in the teens, and it survived the snowstorm of Jan. 23. On Jan. 24, after an overnight low of 11F, it did not show up at the feeder and has not been seen since. I believe that sustained cold finally claimed this remarkable bird.

New house, new yard, new list: (Amalie Tuffin, Jan. 21) “We are busy unpacking in our new home (in north west Durham County, within spitting distance of Orange County) and already have a good yard list going after 3 days of occupancy. We have had a Hermit Thrush, a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers and a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers at our suet feeder, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the front yard, three or more White-breasted Nuthatches at the suet feeder and the platform feeder, a pair of Field Sparrows eating the hulled sunflower, as well as many Cardinals, Chickadees, Titmice, a Northern Mockingbird who haunts our front bushes, Goldfinch, Juncos, Robins etc. It has been a great treat to take periodic unpacking breaks and watch the action outside.

