

# THE BULLETIN

## Chapel Hill Bird Club

March, 2003

(Vol. XXXII, No. 3)

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

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### Next meeting: Monday, March 24

**Where:** Binkley Baptist Church, corner of Willow Dr. and 15-501 Bypass next to University Mall in Chapel Hill. **Note that the meeting room will be the Fellowship Hall**, while our regular room is being renovated.

**When:** 7:15 p.m., refreshments; 7:30 p.m., meeting begins.

**What/Who:** "Applying Remote Sensing Tools to Regional Conservation Planning for Migratory Landbird Stopover Sites" by **Sarah Mabey**, Smith Fellow for The Nature Conservancy at North Carolina State University.

The dramatic seasonal migrations of Nearctic-Neotropical migratory landbirds confound efforts to design effective conservation strategies that will protect migrants throughout all phases of their annual cycle, particularly during passage. However, advances in radar ornithology, geographic information systems (GIS), and our understanding of stopover ecology now make it possible to begin addressing the conservation needs of migrating landbirds at appropriately large scales. Sarah will present an overview of an on-going project that employs weather surveillance radar and GIS tools to locate migratory stopover sites and integrate the temporal and spatial patterns of landbird stopover with data on land cover, habitat configuration, and land use. The goal of the project is to develop a standardized ranking system for prioritizing the conservation value of migratory landbird stopover sites based on data from the southern Mid-Atlantic region.

### Saturday a.m. field trips

Weekly field trips will continue until the spring bird counts start at the end of April. Trips leave from the Glen Lennox shopping center at 7:30 a.m. and generally are over by noon. They're free and open to all, including nonmembers. Beginners are definitely welcome. Bring binoculars and a scope if you have one. If you need details about the destination and the amount

of walking involved, call Doug Shadwick at 942-0479. Glen Lennox is on the north side of Hwy. 54 just east of the Hwy. 15-501 Bypass on the eastern edge of Chapel Hill.

### Upcoming spring bird counts

April 27, Durham

May 4, Chapel Hill

May 10, Raleigh/Wake Co.

May 11, Jordan Lake

[www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc/countsched.html](http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc/countsched.html)  
has contact info.

### Upcoming – lecture on Roger Tory Peterson

On Sat., March 29, at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, the keynote speaker at the Audubon North Carolina annual meeting will be Jim Berry, speaking on "The Impact of Roger Tory Peterson on the Environmental Movement of the 20th Century and His Lasting Legacy." There is a small charge to attend this program. If you have questions regarding the annual meeting, please contact Karen Bearden at 919-844-9050 or via email at [chickadeebirders@earthlink.net](mailto:chickadeebirders@earthlink.net). Or call the state office at 919-929-3899.

### Welcome, new members!

Welcome to the following people who have joined the Chapel Hill Bird Club in the last 12 months.

Jane Brinkley, Chapel Hill

Rob Gardner, Chapel Hill

Dave and Dina Logan, Chapel Hill

Sally Logan, Chapel Hill

Tom and Margaret Scott, Chapel Hill

Edith Tatum, Durham

Amalie Lewis Tuffin, Hillsborough

David Werlinger, Raleigh

Jan Hansen, Chapel Hill

Po-hon Liu, Durham

Hal and Kirsten Snyder, Chapel Hill

Mike Swaim, Efland

Karen Marshall, Pittsboro

Todd Bishop, Pittsboro

Joe and Pat Wheelan, Cary

Susan Stone  
Jim and Paula Weathers

## **Upcoming: Neuse River cleanup**

*submitted by Lena Gallitano*

*Ed. note: What's good for the Neuse River is good for birds and birders. Lena Gallitano, besides being a CHBC member, is president of Wake Audubon and a longtime paddler.*

The Neuse River Foundation in conjunction with Carolina Canoe Club and Pro Canoe and Kayak will be having a Neuse River spring clean up event on Saturday April 12. We will cover from Falls Dam down to Poole Road, more than 20 miles of river. Needless to say, this is an ambitious undertaking, which will require the help of many volunteers. People interested in participating in the cleanup, who have their own canoes or would like to help clean up trash along the Neuse River and around the mouth of Crabtree Creek, are encouraged to show up at Anderson Point Park at 9:00 AM on Saturday. Neuse River Foundation will assist in providing shuttles for canoeists from Poole Road back to Anderson Point after the clean up. Gloves and Bags will be provided. We also need volunteers to provide trucks at some of the drop off points for hauling off trash. Contact the Upper Neuse Office at 919-856-1180 for details (or any additional questions). Pro Canoe and Kayak will be offering free canoe use and shuttle services at Falls Dam, off Falls of the Neuse Road, for people who are interested in participating in the cleanup but DO NOT have their own canoe. Free use will be offered between the hours of 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM on a first come first served basis. Hope to see you there!

## **Congrats to those of you who . . .**

renewed your CHBC membership! Benefits of membership include interesting monthly programs and weekly field trips with expert leaders, the annual coastal and mountain field trips, an annual service project, this newsletter, the club website, and the camaraderie of friendly birders. If you haven't renewed, your mailing label still reads 01/03 in the upper right corner. Please renew to avoid being nagged each month. It's easy. Make your check for \$15 (or \$10 if you're a student) to the **Chapel Hill Bird Club**. Send it to our treasurer, **Ruth Roberson, at 38 Stoneridge Place, Durham 27705**. Thank you!

## **Editors in high places**

Congratulations to Karen Bearden and Kent Fiala, two CHBC members who recently have been drafted as editors for Carolina Bird Club publications. The Carolina Bird Club is the educational and scientific birding association for the two Carolinas. Karen is the new editor of the CBC newsletter and has already sent out her first

two issues. Kent will edit the CBC journal, "The Chat." In addition, CHBC member Will Cook for several years has edited the N.C. General Field Notes section of "The Chat."

## **UNC Barred Owls nesting**

*by Rob Gluck*

Undaunted by ice storms, cold temps, downed branches, and chainsaws, UNC's resident Barred Owls returned to their breeding grounds on McCorkle Place around Dec. 29. After 2 months of cavorting the female seems to have gone to nest around 3/6/03 in the same treehole they have used for the last 6 years. I hope to lead a New Hope Audubon walk at end of May to view them with babies as well as venture into Battle Park for a look at that under-birded area.

## **In-town birding: Bolin Creek**

*by Rob Gluck*

*Ed. note: Rob has often posted his observations on Bolin Creek to Carolinabirds. I asked him to write up directions to the site and a description, so that more of us could enjoy this in-town birding spot. On March 18, Rob reported a Red-shouldered Hawk building a nest within sight of Pinehurst Drive. G.T.*

Bolin Creek is a wonderful watershed area running through the middle of Chapel Hill (a non-profit group, Friends of Bolin Creek, has formed to work for its preservation). Several stretches of it can make for simple local birding. I'll mention just two here. A 1-1/2 mile stretch is part of the local greenway system and runs from Airport Rd. to the Community Center off Estes Blvd. (Another 1 1/2 mi. trail can be picked up behind the Community Center and walked through Battle Park up to Ghimghoul Castle at the University). The greenway stretch is paved, open, and heavily trafficked by people and thus of limited birding potential. However, each spring Red-shouldered Hawks, Barred Owls, Kingfishers, Wood Thrushes, Bluebirds, and all the common woodpeckers appear to nest in the area as well as the usual backyard birds. Cedar Waxwings forage in the area, and Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks pass through as well. (I've even seen a Bald Eagle fly over.) Great Blues and Mallards are occasional on the creek itself. I only occasionally see warblers along this stretch, Parulas being the most regular on migration.

A birdier section of Bolin Creek is a mile stretch running from Pinehurst Dr. (coming off Burning Tree Dr. by Chapel Hill Country Club golf course) to the Rainbow Soccer fields off Cleland Ave. -- technically, the part of this stretch nearest Pinehurst is Little Creek, after the confluence of Bolin and Booker Creeks. You can park near the soccer fields (where there is also a pond to check out) and walk the creek eastward, or, as I more often do, park on Pinehurst near the

golf course ponds (where gulls, herons, egrets, occasional ducks, and killdeer are possible) and walk the creek westward starting beneath the Pinehurst Drive overpass, where Barn Swallows nest in summer. Depending on recent weather, stepping can be messy and some slight bushwhacking may be necessary. (Following heavy rains, I often wear knee-high boots for better accessibility.) Narrowly-dense mixed woodland lines the creek, though residential neighborhood is never far off, even if not visible. Through the year a variety of species can be found in a relatively short stretch: orioles, tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, vireos, buntings, gnatcatchers, flycatchers, thrushes, goldfinch, migrant warblers, several hawk species, all the local woodpeckers, waterthrush, Great Blue Herons, Wood Ducks, and Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers.

Northern sections of Bolin Creek (Carrboro/Orange County) are wilder, with likely more birding prospects, but I am not currently as familiar with those stretches, as the two described.

## **Paddling Lake Mattamuskeet (a swan's-neck deep)**

*by John Argentati*

This past winter John Connors mentioned to me that one of the most memorable things he had ever done was paddling on Mattamuskeet just before it closed for the winter. He remarked on the vast numbers of waterfowl he had seen. I decided that I needed to share that experience and began planning a paddling trip when the lake reopened in March. I convinced Lena Gallitano and Ginger Travis to join me.

Last Friday afternoon [March 7] we drove from the Triangle to Ponzer in Hyde County on Hwy. 45, where we would be spending the night. It was cold and rainy and we weren't so sure that it would clear up by morning... We drove past the location where the Navy is planning to build its airfield. Of course we saw numerous tundra swans in that same area...

Here are some of the birds we spotted on the drive down: Tundra Swans - 300 in fields, Kestrels - 2, Turkey Vulture - 20, Black Vulture - 5, Northern Harrier - 1.

We stayed at a little bed and breakfast in Ponzer called Thomasina's which Kelly Davis had recommended to us. The accommodations were delightful and Thomasina made it feel like a home away from home. It wasn't expensive at \$55/room/night. It is an ideal place to launch paddling trips to either the Pungo river or the west end of Mattamuskeet. It's only a hundred yards from a boat launch on the Pungo and 15 miles from Rose Bay Canal which provides easy access to the west end of Mattamuskeet.

We awoke Saturday morning to a clear sky and a beautiful sunrise. After breakfast we drove the twenty minutes to the Rose Bay Canal. After paddling a mile or so up the canal we entered the lake and were greeted by 50 or so tundra swans. We tried to sneak up on them, but we didn't get very close before they flew. I've seen few things as breathtaking as a flock of tundra swans at close range. What magnificent birds. We paddled approximately nine miles and circumnavigated several of the islands. Most of the day paddling conditions were good. Although Mattamuskeet is 18 miles long, it's only 2 feet deep. If we got tired of paddling, we could have walked...

Here's some of what we saw on the lake. Tundra swans - 75, Osprey - 3 (2 perching on a prospective cypress tree nest site, one diving after a fish), Bald Eagles - 3, Green Winged Teal - 2000-3000, American Widgeon - 8, Shovelers - 50, Ruddy Ducks - 300, Ring-necked Ducks - 20, Great Blue Heron - 10, Great Egret - 3, Canada Goose - 100, Double Crested Cormorants - 125?

Other highlights:

-- Turtle heads -- dozens

-- The whoosh of air from the wings of perhaps 30 ducks of unknown species flying at low level above our heads out in the lake.

-- The isolation of sharing the day with 13 people total - 6 early on as they used their fishing boats to get out into the lake and the 4 that we saw near the islands. It's hard to find a place in the world with that few humans in 7 hours and I love it.

It was wonderful being out on a lake with such large numbers of waterfowl and so few other people. It was a great trip and I'd highly recommend it. If we were doing it over, I think we might have done it as close to the March 1 opening date as possible as much of the waterfowl (esp. snow geese) had already left.

## **Birding Costa Rica**

*by Helmut and Nancy Mueller*

We were on vacation in Costa Rica from 1 through 23 December and did very little but birdwatch from dawn to dusk. The area of Costa Rica is only 37% of that of the state of North Carolina and we did a reasonable job of seeing the country. The only notable areas we missed were Tortuguero, in the extreme northeast and the Osa peninsula in the extreme southwest, both because of essentially nonexistent access by road. The roads in Costa Rica are very bad; many of the roads we went on were accessible only by vehicles with high road clearance and more than a few required 4 wheel drive. The paved highways had frequent potholes. Costa Rica is very mountainous. At its narrowest point there are only about 80 miles between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, with a mountain of 12,500 feet in between! We went from steamy tropics to

frost-filled mornings in little over a day. About 25% of the land area of Costa Rica is National Parks or other reserves.

We hired a guide (Dennis Rogers) who provided transportation and helped with dealing in Spanish. Jim Zook did an excellent job of substituting for Dennis on four days. We find that having a local birdwatcher as a guide is extremely useful in a strange environment. They know the birds, the vocalizations and where to find them. We saw 476 species in the 3 weeks.

A list of the number of species observed (some only by vocalizations) follows: 3 species of Tinamous, 1 Grebe, 5 Pelecaniformes, including Brown Booby, 2 Ducks, including Black-bellied Whistling Duck, 11 Herons, including Boat-billed and Tiger Heron, 1 Wood Stork, 3 Ibis, etc, 3 Vultures, including King Vulture, 28 Falconiformes, including Laughing Falcon, Bat Falcon, Black and Ornate Hawk-eagles, Pearl and Double-toothed Kites, 4 Cracids, including Great Curassow, 1 Quail, 4 Gruiformes, including Sungrebe, 21 Charadriiformes, including Thick-knee and Collared Plover, 16 Pigeons, 14 Parrots, including Scarlet Macaw, 5 Cuckoos, 5 Owls, 5 Caprimulgiformes, including 2 Potoos, 5 Swifts, 37 Hummingbirds, 9 Trogons, including Resplendent Quetzal, 4 Kingfishers, 3 Motmots, 1 Jacamar, 1 Puffbird, 2 Barbets, 5 Toucans, 13 Woodpeckers, 18 Woodcreepers, including Brown-billed Scythe-bill, 16 Antbirds, 1 Tapaculo, 5 Becards, Tityras, 3 Cotingas, 6 Manakins, 45 Flycatchers, including Royal Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tyrant and Torrent Tyrant, 3 Jays, 8 Vireos, 2 Silky Flycatchers, 1 Dipper, 1 Bananaquit, 29 Warblers, 11 Thrushes, 19 Wrens, 3 Gnatcatchers, 5 Swallows, 43 Tanagers, 14 Blackbirds and 16 Finches, etc.

We enjoyed all of our time in Costa Rica, but if we must select a few places for special mention the following were outstanding: The two sites of the Organization for Tropical Studies at La Selva and Las Cruces, and the National Parks at Carara and Tapanti. We should also mention the site where we found the Resplendent Quetzal but our notes are inadequate and I cannot find it on the maps; it was in the Cerro de la Muerte. We saw many amazingly beautiful birds on the trip, but the Quetzal was the highlight! Dennis Rogers has a web site: (<http://www.earthfoot.org/guides/rogers.htm>). Jim Zook can be reached by email: [jrzook@racsa.co.cr](mailto:jrzook@racsa.co.cr)

### **In brief . . .**

\*\* Two **Great Horned Owl** fledglings were reported March 14 in Raleigh on the Allegheny Greenway. Harriet Sato may be able to give directions. Email: [hsato@bellsouth.net](mailto:hsato@bellsouth.net).

\*\* Susan Campbell banded North Carolina's first **Allen's Hummingbird**, an immature male, on March 11 in Manteo, Dare Co. It is wintering at the home of Mickey and Elayne Kodroff, 130 Holly Hills Lane. Tel: 252-473-2943. Photo at: [www.carolinabirdclub.org/allens\\_humm.html](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/allens_humm.html)

\*\* **Red-necked Grebes** were seen in March at Harris, Falls and Jordan Lakes.

\*\* Harry LeGrand with Derb Carter and Ricky Davis reported a **Clarke's Grebe** from the old lighthouse site at Hatteras on March 15. Harry says this is a first N.C. record. Harry and Derb also saw a **Yellow-legged Gull** on Cape Point on March 14.

\*\* March has been a terrific month for **alcids** on the N.C. coast, with dovebies and razorbills seen by many observers. The cherries on the cheesecake were provided in the form of a **Thick-billed Murre**. The bird was found at Ft. Macon on March 11 by Stuart Pimm of Duke University. Josh Rose phoned the report to Sandy Cash, who posted it to Carolinabirds. A stampede of birders took off for the coast, including many stalwart CHBC members. This is an extremely rare bird for N.C. For photos, see Will's website: [www.duke.edu/~cwcook/pix/tbmurre.html](http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/pix/tbmurre.html).

\*\* A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was spotted in Tyrell Co. along Hwy. 64 by four CHBC members making a day trip to the coast (March 1): Kent Fiala, Shelley Theye, Patsy Bailey and Lee Van Malssen.

\*\* On March 4, Russell Roberson saw an immature **Bald Eagle** soaring over the intersection of I-40 and Hwy. 15-501. Commuter bird?

### **In memory**

Eleanor Wagstaff was a longtime Chapel Hill Bird Club member and enthusiastic participant in Christmas bird counts. She died last year at age 90. (The editor regrets not learning until recently that she was a CHBC member.)

### **CHBC officers**

*President:* Joe Bearden, 844-9050

Email: [chickadeebirders@earthlink.net](mailto:chickadeebirders@earthlink.net)

*Vice-president, Raleigh-Durham:* Karen Bearden, same contact info as Joe Bearden

*Vice-president, Chapel Hill:* Judy Murray, 942-2985

Email: [jmurray@unc.edu](mailto:jmurray@unc.edu)

*Secretary:* Karen Piplani, 929-6553,

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