

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

February, 2004

(Vol. XXXIII, No. 2)

c/o Ginger Travis

5244 Old Woods Rd.

Hillsborough, NC 27278

Next meeting, Monday, Feb. 23

Where: The lounge, Binkley Baptist Church, corner of 15-510 Bypass and Willow Drive, next to University Mall in Chapel Hill.

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

Program: Dr. Mike Skakuj on identifying shorebirds. This should be a real treat. Mike is an ornithologist and artist from Poland who has taught field ornithology at Gdansk University and served on the Polish Records Committee. He is author or coauthor of 60 papers, and he has illustrated 12 books. He's contributed two covers to *The Auk* and one to *British Birds*, in addition to illustrating a lot of journal and magazine articles. Mike is in the States for a few years with his wife, a post-doc at Duke, and he really loves teaching people to improve their ID skills.

Snowed out!

The Jan. 26 CHBC meeting was called off – along with classes at all the local universities and secondary and elementary schools – thanks to 3 inches or more of snow and sleet and temperatures that never left the low 20s. This is the second cancellation in four years. The January 2000 meeting also was called off when a totally unexpected blizzard dumped up to 20 inches on the Triangle. Our speaker this time was to have been Will Mackin. As an alternative, during the snow CHBC members spent a lot of extra time staring out the window at their feeders. (See CHBC birders in brief, below.)

Got a story?

This is your editor. I'm always looking for items for the CHBC Bulletin, particularly things that have not already been posted to Carolinabirds: trip reports, interesting encounters with birds in your yard or far away, book reviews, you name it – if it's related to birds and it's interesting to you, why not write about it for your fellow readers of the Bulletin? Don't be shy about grammar, spelling and so forth – that's what editors are for. Just write! Or maybe you have a very short item. That might work for another new, occasional feature of the Bulletin – CHBC birders in brief – consisting of just a sentence or two about club members and where they've been or what they're

seeing. Just email, call or write me: gtravis@email.unc.edu. Tel. 919-942-7746. Postal: 5244 Old Woods Rd., Hillsborough 27278.

Saturday field trips

Except for Feb. 14, the Saturday field trips continue every week. Meet at Glen Lennox shopping center and plan to leave at 7:30 a.m. sharp. Trips are over by noon. Glen Lennox is on the north side of Hwy. 54 just a few yards east of the Hwy. 15-501 Bypass in Chapel Hill. Field trips are free and open to all. Beginners are encouraged to come. If you need details of the destination, call Doug Shadwick, field trip chair, at 942-0479.

Are you one of the 62? Or one of the 24?

Ruth Roberson reports that of 86 expired memberships, 24 had been renewed as of Jan. 28, leaving 62 to go. Kudos to the 24! Are you one of the 62? If so, please don't forget to renew your membership in the Chapel Hill Bird Club. It's time to do that if your mailing label says "Jan. 04" in the upper right corner. Make out a check to the **Chapel Hill Bird Club** for \$15 (for one year, or multiply times the number of years you want) and send it to our treasurer **Ruth Roberson, 38 Stoneridge Place, Durham, NC 27705.**

MLK weekend trip notes

by Doug Shadwick via Ginger Travis

Doug Shadwick reports a good turnout for a good trip to Mattamuskeet and the Outer Banks over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend. On Saturday, Jan. 17, Lake Mattamuskeet had the usual waterfowl, but the causeway and other locations on land held low numbers of passerines, at least as compared to past trips. The group did make a side trip to Kelly Davis's nearby farm to look for Barn Owls in the silos but found none. On Sunday the group took the Swan Quarter ferry to Ocracoke. There were the usual Common and Red-throated Loons, also Surf and Black Scoters. But the highlight on Ocracoke was Common Redpoll – a pair have been frequenting the feeder in the yard of Elizabeth Hanrahan, a wildlife rehabber. This bird is a real rarity as a winter

visitor to North Carolina. Continuing north by way of the Hatteras ferry, the group saw Brant in good numbers both around Hatteras Inlet and at the south end of the Oregon Inlet bridge. Brant have been scarce the last few winters, so this year's numbers are a change. A Long-tailed Duck (aka Old Squaw) also was found at Oregon Inlet. Monday's birding centered on Pea Island, Bodie Island and the Alligator River NWR – lots of shorebirds at the first two, but no Rough-legged Hawk at Alligator River. Many, many, many Northern Harriers, however, and Russell Roberson and Mike Swaim saw what they thought was a Broad-winged Hawk, which would be another real rarity for the season. Folks on the trip included the following (if we've left out any names, very sorry!): Ruth and Russell Roberson, Rick Payne, Judith Fortney, Bill and Rachel Harden, Harriet Sato, Bruce Young, Ken Lundstrom, Mike Swaim and his friend Pam, Judy Murray, Bob Ryzinski, Rob Piller, and Shantanu Phukan.

Something to keep in mind for next year: Elizabeth Hanrahan has offered to guide the group on Portsmouth Island, which requires a boat trip from Ocracoke and is the site of a now-abandoned town plus lots of great habitat. (See John Fussell's coastal bird-finding guide for a description.) Elizabeth also wrote the following in an email, concerning CHBC members who personally contributed to her organization: *"The Chapel Hill Bird Club gave Ocracoke Wildlife Rehabilitation, Rescue and Education a generous donation last weekend when members came to see the Common Redpolls. The gift is greatly appreciated. . . . Thanks, again for the donation. And, thanks to the many members who took the time to trek down to Ocracoke. It was a pleasure to have met so many nice people."*

Lists, lists, lists!

compiled by Ginger Travis

Here are list totals from members who submitted them. At least one birder reached a highly significant milestone – see notes below.

World

1781 Alan Johnston
1604 Jeff Pippen
766 Kent Fiala
588 Will Cook
445 Ken Lundstrom

North America (incl. Mexico)

924 Jeff Pippen
664 Alan Johnston
618 Kent Fiala
417 Ken Lundstrom

Europe

42 Ken Lundstrom

Africa

713 Alan Johnston

ABA

691 Norm Budnitz
642 Jeff Pippen
619 Kent Fiala
578 Will Cook
540 Karen and Joe Bearden

U.S (lower 48)

641 Jeff Pippen
619 Kent Fiala

N.C.

400 Jeff Pippen
386 Will Cook
354 Kent Fiala
326 Norm Budnitz
260 Karen and Joe Bearden
252 Alan Johnston

Florida

262 Karen and Joe Bearden

N.C. 2003

281 Jeff Pippen
256 Will Cook
249 Kent Fiala

Year 2003

369 Kent Fiala

Triangle

273 Will Cook
248 Jeff Pippen
218 Kent Fiala

Chatham Co.

232 Will Cook
195 Jeff Pippen

Durham Co.

210 Will Cook
201 Jeff Pippen

Wake Co.

182 Will Cook
137 Jeff Pippen

Orange Co.

193 Will Cook
175 Jeff Pippen

Dare County

280 Kent Fiala

Yard	
145	Tom and Janet Krakauer
131	Norm Budnitz
119	Ginger Travis
78	Kent Fiala
72	Alan Johnston
67	Karen and Joe Bearden

LIST NOTES

World: One of Alan Johnston's most recent world birds was Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, *Decaeum cruentatum*, on the grounds of the royal palace in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

North Carolina: Jeff Pippen reached 400 species for N.C. with the Gray Flycatcher in Chatham Co. – what a bird for a milestone! The “N.C. 400 club” is a very small group, led (so far as we know) by John Fussell, who's said to be at 416. Karen and Joe Bearden, who began birding in Florida, now have a North Carolina list that will soon pass their Florida total.

Yard: The Krakauers' yard is defined by a regular one-mile circuit around their land and to the nearby Little River; they added 4 new species in 2003; they have also seen 72 butterfly species in the yard. The Beardens' yard is a residential lot in north Raleigh where they have seen Brown Creeper, Baltimore Oriole, Evening Grosbeak, and a Bald Eagle (flyover bird) – but none dearer to Karen's heart than her chickadees. The Beardens have also hosted a Rufous Hummingbird this winter.

Butterflies (aka “honorary birds”)

ABA Area

296	Jeff Pippen
148	Will Cook

N.C.

147	Jeff Pippen
134	Will Cook

N.C. 2003

103	Will Cook
93	Jeff Pippen

What's a flycatcher eat when there's snow on the ground?

Shelley Theye has made several trips to see the Gray Flycatcher on Hanks Chapel Rd. She and many others have speculated on what a flycatcher finds to eat in periods of cold when there are few if any insects – for instance, Jan. 9-11, the first time it snowed and stayed cold in the Triangle. Shelley received the following message on Jan. 12 from Robin Diaz in Florida.

“During migration here in South Florida, we consistently see flycatchers feeding on small fruit. Perhaps they are hardwired not to pass up available food, even if not first choice. I've seen Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher eating Virginia Creeper berries, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher eating Gumbo Limbo fruit and Olive-sided Flycatcher eating ripe Strangler Fig

(ficus family) fruit. The Least Flycatchers that winter here have also been observed eating ripe ficus fruit. I'm happy to see your little gray guy doing OK so far. Perhaps he's finding dried fruit in addition to available insects.”

Lawsuit challenges Navy on proposed outlying landing field

by Derb Carter (to Carolinabirds, 1/8)

The Southern Environmental Law Center will tomorrow file a lawsuit in federal court challenging the decisions by the Department of the Navy to develop an outlying landing field next to the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR and to designate 900 square miles of northeastern North Carolina for military jet combat practice. The military airspace would affect four wildlife refuges, a wilderness area and Cape Lookout National Seashore. Both proposals would have significant adverse effects on internationally important waterfowl areas, endangered red wolves and other wildlife. Eighty percent of the eastern US tundra swan population will be affected. The Pungo Unit had an all time high count of 70,000 snow geese last month. Siting a landing field next to the refuge not only harms the birds but endangers pilots. These military activities if allowed will decrease the enjoyment of some of North Carolina's most important public lands for birding and other activities. We are filing the suit on behalf of the National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, and the North Carolina Wildlife Federation. I know many on Carolinabirds have been following this issue. Details of the lawsuit and background on the issue will appear this afternoon on our website SouthernEnvironment.org for those interested.

Ed note: Derb Carter is a senior attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center. You can read the press release, the list of opponents to the landing field (which includes some federal as well as state agencies) and the actual legal brief by following links given at the Southern Environmental Law Center website. The easiest way to find what you want is to click on “Site Map” and then on any links of interest.

S.C. Rufous Hummingbird found near Hillsborough, N.C.

by Susan Campbell (to Carolinabirds, 2/4)

On Monday morning [Feb. 2] I recaptured a banded Rufous Hummingbird here in North Carolina. She is an adult female who has been at the feeder of the Fahertys in downtown Hillsborough (Orange Co. north of Chapel Hill) since October. Needless to say both they and I were thrilled when we spotted the tiny silver bracelet already affixed to her leg. They had a big patch of *Salvia guaranitica* that the bird

was apparently first attracted to. And the Eno River flows within sight of their yard. Nowadays this feisty hummer can be found foraging in and around the big, old evergreen bushes (boxwoods, hollies), Japanese mahonia and sapsucker wells not far from her feeder.

This little gal was originally banded by Gary Phillips in Murrell's Inlet, S.C. on January 26, 2003 as a juvenile. Apparently she showed up and then moved on from that location in pretty shortly order. Now, as a third-year bird, she is about 173 miles to the northwest of where she was first located. That's one more piece we can add to the puzzle. . . .

Birding in Ecuador, part 1

by Tom Driscoll

My wife, Barbara, some good friends, and I birded in Ecuador for 22 days starting in early October 2003. Because Ecuador has over 1500 species of birds, it's a country I've always wanted to visit. Because it has over 150 species of hummingbirds, Barbara was excited about going as well. I've always wanted to go to Amazonian jungles, so Ecuador could fulfill this wish as well. After we decided to go, I contacted Jane Lyons, an old friend, who now lives in Ecuador and runs a tour company. Because Ecuador is about the size of Colorado, I thought we could bird the whole country in about three weeks. However, she recommended that we concentrate on 3 or 4 areas and spend about 5 to 6 days in each area. She said that getting around in Ecuador was much more difficult than the U.S.

After some negotiations between us, we decided to stay on the west slope, eastern slope, the edge of the Amazon Basin for three days (our friends were only staying two weeks and did not wish to go to the jungle), 5 days in the jungle (about 3 hours east on a boat down the Napo River), and then at an old hacienda south of Quito for 2.5 days. As you can imagine, each place had its own special birds. Our friends did not want to drive in Ecuador (they didn't want me to drive in Ecuador either), so Jane recommended a birding guide/driver. She chose Edison Buenano (Goodyear) who is college educated and speaks English well, but let us speak Spanish too! He is great! He knew the birds and their calls very, very well. Edison has seen some 1300 birds in Ecuador, but we confidently told him we would find him a lifer! At each location, he would tell us a bird or two that we could possibly see there that would be a lifer for him (more on this later). I would very much recommend Edison as a guide and I have his and Jane's contact information if you are interested.

We flew into Quito (about 5 hours from Miami) in the evening and there were so many clouds that we couldn't see the mountains. Quito is in a montane valley between the west and east Andes. Although Quito is just south of the equator (hence Ecuador), the elevation is 9000 feet, so we had to have both warm and cold weather clothing!

Packing was very difficult. Going through customs was easy and soon we were on our way to our hotel. Quito, the capital, is a modern city with a population of about 2.4 million. We got into bed fairly quickly, but I was too excited to sleep!

I woke to strange birdcalls at about 5 a.m. I jumped up and grabbed my binoculars and ran to the window. The first bird I saw was a Great Thrush, a lifer. Breakfast was still another hour and Barbara was not ready to get up. Of course, I showered and shaved and was quickly on the hotel grounds. I saw many Rufous-collared Sparrows (we saw it 17 days out of 22), Eared Doves, and a Vermillion Flycatcher. The first new hummingbird, a Sparkling Violetear, was also on the grounds. After breakfast, Edison picked us up and we took off for Yanacocha Nature Preserve (10,000 feet elevation), on the east side of the western Andes. On the way there we saw a Streak-throated Bush-tyrant and a Southern Yellow-Grosbeak. The highlights at Yanacocha were Andean Pygmy Owl, Curved-bill Tinamou, Short-eared Owl (flying in the low clouds), Great Sapphirewing (a hummer), Collared Inca (hummer), several mountain-tanagers, several flower-piercers, Red-crested Cotinga, and several species of fruiteaters. After lunch, we drove over the Andes to the western slope and stopped to bird along the roads (very little traffic). We saw several flocks and saw the first of many Blackburnian Warblers who spend 8 months a year there. Edison considers them an Ecuadorian species. We saw Blackburnian Warblers on 16 days during the trip. Highlights for the afternoon included the only Toucan Barbets we saw, many tanagers (there are approximately 161 tanager and allied species in Ecuador), many flycatchers (including becards, tyrants, kingbirds, etc.), and many others. We saw Tropical Kingbirds on most days during the trip. The trip trash birds were Blackburnian Warbler, Tropical Kingbird, Rufous-collared Sparrow, and Blue-and-White Swallow, all seen on 16 or more days during the trip. We dragged into Sachatamia Lodge very tired, but very satisfied. I saw 51 lifers on the first day. I saw 51 lifers on the second day as well and had thoughts of an amazing number for the trip; however, I didn't see that many lifers in one day again.

For the next five days, we birded from the Sachatamia Lodge near Mindo. We birded at different altitudes, different habitats including rain forest, and different temperatures. We stopped at several lodges and houses that had hummingbird feeders and started seeing amazing hummingbirds including Long-tailed Sylph, Empress Brilliant, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Booted Racket-tail, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Buff-tailed Coronet, Green-tailed Trainbearer, and many others. We saw 61 species of hummingbirds during the trip!

Highlights for this part of the trip include amazing views of the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, Tanager Finch, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Giant Antpitta

(our friend Carl found this amazing bird), Little Cuckoo, Striped Cuckoo, Narino Tapaculo, Tawny Gnatwren, Golden-winged Manakin, Club-winged Manakin, Black-headed Antthrush, Choco Toucan, Golden Quetzal, and White-capped Dipper.

We saw the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock very early on the last day there on which we drove back to Quito and then north to Otavalo. On the way there, we stopped to bird a little and went to Media del Mundo, a monument to the equator. Otavalo has the best indigenous market in Ecuador, so we spent most of the next day shopping and negotiating with the vendors. I heartily recommend going to Otavalo while in Ecuador. We then drove to the eastern Andes to the eastern slope. We stopped at the beginning of Papallacta Pass at about 12,000 feet to look for the Giant Hummingbird. We saw one. It flew like a swallow and it is about the size of a Hermit Thrush; dull-colored, though! Our friends saw a pair of Andean Condors just before they flew behind a mountain. We missed it and didn't see one during the rest of the trip. Rats! We drove on to Guango Lodge which is just beyond Papallacta Pass at about 8500 feet elevation. We got there in time to see the hummingbirds and they are incredible. We saw a Sword-billed Hummingbird (a 4-inch bill), Violet-tailed Sylph, and Tourmaline Sunangel.

The next day, we drove back up to Papallacta Pass. We stopped at a lake to see the Andean Teal, Andean Gull, a Viridian Metaltail (hummer), and a Black-Chested Buzzard-Eagle perched on a high crest. We then drove up higher to a Polylepsis forest. We walked in a bit and found a Grass Wren that is considered conspecific with a Sedge Wren. They look the same and occupy the same habitat, but the call was different; a new species? We walked by the small patch of forest and found a Tawny Antpitta and little else. We had moved on, but Barbara went back down to take a picture of something and found a flock. She called us back and we saw about 10 species. The highlight was the Giant Conebill, a very attractive bird. A little later, we walked on to another high mountain lake and found some more teal and Andean Ruddy Ducks. We saw a Great Horned Owl in this area too (found by a Brit in another group).

We were now chilly, but we drove higher up and found some cinclodes and canasteros. Cinclodes nest in holes in the banks created by the road. Edison told us that to find the Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, a ptarmigan-like bird but apparently related to shorebirds, we must go even higher. So, we drove up to some antennas at about 14,400 feet. It was very cold now and the wind was blowing very strongly. We walked around for about 30 minutes and Barbara and our friends went back to the car. We had heard some but not seen them yet. But, as Edison and I were about to give up, one walked into view; a great view. I waved to Barbara and our friends, but they didn't come to look. I yelled for

them to come over and the bird started flying. Suddenly, there was a flock of them and they flew over Barbara and our friends, so everyone got to see the birds. One of my favorites for the trip and one I had wanted to see! What a morning! After lunch and the next day, we birdwatched around the lodge. The highlights were the hummingbirds (including a rare Mountain Avocetbill), Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, Torrent Duck (which lives in fast, rocky rivers), Northern Mountain-Cacique, Pearled Treerunner, Turquoise Jay, Slaty Brush-finch, and Hooded Siskin.

We then drove to the very beautiful San Isidro Lodge and spent four days there. A wonderful place owned by a birding guide (Mitch Lysinger, for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours). The altitude is about 6000 feet at San Isidro. The bird highlights here were Crimson-mantled Woodpecker (an amazing woodpecker in a land of amazing woodpeckers), Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher (very small and quick), Plain-breasted Hawk (an accipiter), Crested Quetzal, White-Capped Parrot, Black-billed Peppershrike, Broad-winged Hawk (that fooled us), Chestnut-breasted Coronet (hummer), Emerald-bellied Puffleg (hummer), Chestnut-bellied Thrush, White-backed Fire-eye, Rufous-bellied Nightjar, and Long-tailed Antbird. (*To be continued next month.*)

CHBC birders in brief

by Ginger Travis (mostly from Carolinabirds)

Mike Schultz made an unsuccessful try for the Gray Flycatcher at Hanks Chapel on Jan. 9 as the snow fell. No flycatcher, but . . . "as I got in my car to leave, I noticed 8 birds walking along the paved road towards me. They were pipits!! Right out in the open, foraging in the road. They came right up to the car for the best looks I have ever had of [American] pipits."

Shantanu Phukan got the Gray Flycatcher on his third try (about average!) on Jan. 14, after getting good looks at a Red-shouldered Hawk, a Northern Harrier, a black cat and some gravediggers in the Hanks Chapel cemetery while he waited. (Very Edgar Allen Poe – only thing missing was the raven.) On Jan. 16, **Lucretia Kinney** had good luck and got the Gray Flycatcher on her first try, after waiting a cold hour.

From **Edith Tatum**: "A Gray Catbird was found today at Eno River State Park. I really didn't expect to see it there at this time of year. I was leading Birding 101 at the park with several beginning birders. The usual winter birds were found. It is so great to hear the ooh's and aah's over wonderful views of Golden-crowned Kinglets." At home, Edith also got yard bird number 89 in the snow. It was a Rusty Blackbird attracted to corn she threw out for squirrels (Jan. 26).

For one cold day, Jan. 25, **Magnus Persmark, Rosalie Hammond, and daughter Anna** hosted a

female Baltimore Oriole, which suddenly showed up in their Chapel Hill yard during the snow and sleet.

Amalie Tuffin, outside Hillsborough, got tons of birds during the snow days, including the quintessential bad-weather indicator species, Fox Sparrow. But a Brown-headed Nuthatch, too? Weird but true.

Bob and Rena Perkins recorded Fox Sparrow as a new yard bird on Jan. 27, again thanks to weather. (Moral: No weather is bad if it brings good birds.)

Ginger Travis got a new feeder bird. On Jan. 26 a male Hairy Woodpecker came to take suet for the first time in memory. On that day Ginger saw or heard in her yard 6 of the 7 winter woodpecker species. (No Red-headed.)

Pat Coin gave the weather credit for his yard and neighborhood sightings not only of Fox Sparrow but also Winter Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Hermit Thrush (Jan. 28).

Jeff Pippen, Will Cook, Rob Van Epps and Harry LeGrand found some good birds at Cape Hatteras Point on Jan. 18: a Red-necked Grebe in the surf (Rob), a California Gull (Jeff), an immature Black-headed Gull (Will), and three Common Goldeneyes (Harry) They also saw the Common Redpolls at Elizabeth Hanrahan's feeder on Ocracoke on Jan. 17.

Jeff Pippen also reported on Feb. 4 that he saw 82 Purple Finches on a one-mile section of trail in Duke Forest starting at Gate 26 on Whitfield Rd.

Steve Shultz made a run up to Kerr Lake on Jan. 24 (last day of nice weather before the snow hit) where he saw Common Goldeneye, Greater Scaup, lots of Horned Grebes and Common Loons. But the prize species was Snow Bunting – 5 individuals easily seen on Hwy. Va. 4 on a causeway just south of the dam. The birds have been there for a month or more presenting a good opportunity for study.

Nancy and Helmut Mueller recently got back from Kenya, where they saw 429 species of birds and took many photos. Helmut invites folks to take a look at his pictures. Go to the Web site <http://photoisland.com> and sign in as *helmutnc*. Then give the password, hawk..

Jordan Lake Christmas Count

by Norm Budnitz

The Jordan Lake (NC) Christmas Bird Count was held on December 28, 2003 – a cold (a.m.), mild (p.m.), clear, beautiful winter day. Our counters identified 90 species, a bit below our average of 92 for the preceding ten years. Our total of 15,943 individual birds was down from last year, reflecting a decrease in Ring-billed Gulls. (The R-b Gulls seem to have moved to Falls Lake this year. Very large numbers were seen there one week after our count.) We had 59 birders (average: 61) in 24 parties (average: 22) who counted for 187 party-hours (a new high, average: 142). That's approximately 85

birds per party hour, much lower than our 10-year average of 131 – more time in the field; fewer gulls; fewer birds per party hour.

But who can complain about the number vicissitudes when one small, relatively nondescript bird turned up in the view of Josh Rose, Bill Lupardus, and Glenn Simon. Their Gray Flycatcher ranks as one of the all-time special birds ever seen in the history of the Jordan Count. Though only identified as an *Empidonax* species at the time, the bird was seen and studied in detail by members of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee as well as many other local and regional birders. Loren Hintz, Margaret Vimmerstedt, and their son Carl Hintz also found a species new to our Jordan Count for this time of year. Their 2 Spotted Sandpipers wouldn't have raised any eyebrows in the spring, but they are quite unusual for December. There have only been a handful of winter reports of Spotted in Piedmont NC in the past 10 years. Carol Williamson watched 13 Snow Geese fly overhead. This was the first occurrence of this species on our count since one lone individual was reported back in 1983. Will Cook found a Great Black-backed Gull and counted 22 Herring Gulls from Ebenezer Point in mid-afternoon. Alan Krakauer, visiting his parents Tom and Janet, identified a Merlin as it perched in a pine tree and then flew.

Notable numbers: Each year we seem to add a few new record high numbers for at least a few species, and this year was no exception. Witness: Horned Grebe – 9 (previous high was 88); Snow Goose – 13 (1); Wild Turkey – 9 (2); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – 66 (61); Carolina Chickadee – 421 (420, a squeaker); Yellow-rumped Warbler – 367 (338).

Missed species: Northern Bobwhite and Loggerhead Shrike, Palm Warbler and Black-and-white. Some years we get 'em. Some years we don't. And no one turned up a Savannah Sparrow this year.

Kudos: Rose, Lupardus, and Simon took home the honors for high species total with 57, followed by Tom Howard and Doug Shadwick, with 52 each. Brian Strong got all three owl species. Andy Upshaw and Rouse Wilson found their cluster of Wilson's Snipe again this year. Their count of 32 has only been exceeded once: 130(!) Snipe in 1979, when Jordan Lake was in its formative years.

For the record: We had 59 birders in 24 parties. We 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 (260F to 580F) 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.

(Visit CHBC on the Web: www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc)