

c/o R. Gluck, 700 Bolinwood Dr. #24-B  
Chapel Hill, NC. 27514  
thrush@hotmail.com



**THE BULLETIN...**  
**Chapel Hill Bird Club**  
February 2006  
<http://chbc.carolinanature.com>

**To :**

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*Vol. 35*

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*No. 2*

>> **NEXT PROGRAM: Monday, Feb. 27**  
**“Illustrating Nature: Where Art Meets Science”**

>} *Thought for the Day* >} >} >}

“A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to leave alone.”

~ Thoreau

**When/Where:** 7:15pm./refreshments; 7:30pm./meeting  
The lounge, Olin T. Binkley Baptist Church, corner of Hwy. 15-501 bypass and Willow Dr., behind University Mall, Chapel Hill.

**Dues and Don'ts**

Another reminder to check your mailing label and see if your Club membership has recently expired, in which event *don't* forget to mail in your dues to Ruth at the address below. [email subscribers will be notified at some point if their renewal is past due. Let me, or Ruth or Will know if you'd like to be added to the email subscriber list and download your newsletter off the Web -- saves the Club a chunk of change.]

**Who/What:** Outstanding artist/bird illustrator Dr. Doug Pratt from Raleigh's NC Museum of Natural Sciences will be on hand to tell us about his craft. He recently returned to N.C. (his home state) after many years as a research associate at the LSU Museum of Natural Science. If you own a National Geographic Field Guide you're already familiar with Doug's work as he contributed several illustrations to that volume, and is an author or illustrator for 10 other books as well. Come join us for a very informative presentation.

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**~~ Membership Form ~~**

(become a member or give a gift membership to a friend!)

~ **Saturday Morning Field Trips** ~

Local field trips, generally led by Doug Shadwick, depart from Glen Lennox Shopping Center parking lot off Hwy 54 promptly at 7:30 am. most Saturday mornings. All skill levels welcome. Trips are usually over by noon. Dress for the weather and for walking. For further details call Doug at 942-0479.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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ph \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

**MLK Weekend Success**

10 or so intrepid birders followed Doug Shadwick on a windy outing to the coast over MLK weekend. They started off with a Sora Rail in Washington, NC., and then at Lake Mattamuskeet had a Black-headed Gull, Glossy Ibises, and an Orange-crowned Warbler among the highlights. After much effort, good views of a Franklin's Gull were finally attained on the coast, where other nice sightings included a Pacific Loon, Ipswich Savannah Sparrow, and possible Western or Clark's Grebe.

new member: \_\_\_\_ or, renewal: \_\_\_\_

dues: \$15/yr. individuals/family, \$10/yr. students  
send checks payable to Chapel Hill Bird Club to:

**Ruth Roberson, 38 Stoneridge Pl., Durham, NC.  
27705**

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**Field trips, counts, meetings/talks, webpage, newsletter, checklists, fun, knowledge... your Chapel Hill Bird Club!**

## Who's Who -- Getting To Know Your Fellow Club Members

Tom Krakauer is a zoologist (herpetologist) by training, but best known to many as the retired CEO of Durham's Museum of Life and Science, where he spent 19 of his 30-year Museum Director career.

Tom was raised near Buffalo, NY, where his interest in birding was sparked around age 6 in part by a winter irruption of Evening Grosbeaks. Grosbeaks, especially the male Rose-breasted, remain among his favorite birds.

Tom's wife Janet was also an avid biologist/naturalist and birder, and there must be something to this genetics stuff because their son Alan just received a Ph.D. in ornithology, and is doing post-doc work on the Sage Grouse.

Tom's N. American life list stands at 672 birds, and he has an equally impressive yard list in north Durham (near the Little River) of 150. Among his travels, a favorite U.S. birding locale is Tigertail Beach on Marco Island, FL., with its excellent views of shorebirds, including simultaneous close views of Snowy, Piping, Wilson's, and Semipalmated Plovers.

Tom's pick for a favorite read went back to his childhood and a volume entitled **Wild Animals I Have Known** by Ernest Thompson Seton, and a couple of his current side interests are butterflies and genealogy.

Tom's birding thrills include seeing a Laysan Albatross on Monterey Bay, and watching flocks of Sandhill Cranes return to the Platte River in Nebraska at Sunset. A White-winged Crossbill that hung around their feeder for several weeks in Roanoke was also nice. But I'll leave you with one last story Tom has passed along to me:

"In 1972, Janet and I were scouting in Florida for a January Term trip for students at Hollins College where I was teaching. At that time I was subscribing to Florida Audubon, and enjoyed reading the unsubstantiated records of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers nesting in Central Florida.

Well here goes. We were down at Lake Placid and were visiting the Archbold Biological Station [where interestingly, Dr. John Fitzpatrick, head of the current Arkansas search, was once Director]. After dinner we took a drive along country roads off the ridge to look for critters. There were cypress swamps along the road. Shortly before dark we saw a large woodpecker at the side of the road. It appeared to be large for a Pileated. It sat there for a brief moment before it took off. We were both struck by its large size and the fact that the hind edges of the wings were extensively white. We looked at each other and both said could that be an Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Of course we said, "Naw."

Is it likely that it was an Ivory-bill, No!. Is it on my life list? "No" And Yet... the recent sightings have certainly rekindled my interest in that sighting of 30+ years ago."

....as well they should!

## Ricky's Bi-i-i-g Year

Premier NC birder Ricky Davis reported results from his 2005 "Big Year" of birding the state of NC. He finished with a record-setting 348 species while driving 20,000+ miles criss-crossing the state, including 40 trips to the coast! Among the many highlight species were: Arctic Loon, Atlantic Puffins, European Storm-Petrel, Swallow-tailed Kite, Mourning Warbler, Magnificent Frigatebird, Tropical Kingbird, Say's Phoebe, and Rough-legged Hawk. Quite a state we have here... and in Ricky, quite a birder! CONGRATS!!

## NC Birding Trail Making Progress

\$100,000 in grants have been earmarked for a proposed statewide network of birding sites across N.C. linked by highways, for birders and ecotourists alike. Birding trails have proved successful in 30+ other states already. The coastal section of the NC version is scheduled to be completed in this year, the Piedmont section in 2007, and Mountain in 2008. If you'd like more information you can go to:  
<http://www.ncbirdingtrail.org>



## -- A Few January Highlights --

**1-1-06** H. Legrand reports 1 **Tundra Swan** and a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at Falls Lake.

**1-2** S. Shultz spots a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Falls. Wm. Leuchtenberg is thrilled to have a **Baltimore Oriole** appear in his Chapel Hill yard for the first time 25+ years.

**1-8** K. Fiala finds a **Lincoln's Sparrow** along Durham's Sandy Creek Trail. B. Bockhahn reports 2 **Ravens** at Eno State Park, and additionally a **Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher**.

**1-23** B. Bockhahn reports an array of the usual ducks, 7 **Bald Eagles**, and 2 **Greater Black-backed Gulls** at Falls Lake.

**1-24** J. Murray is revisited by an **Audubon's Warbler** (western Yellow-rumped) in her Chapel Hill yard. Judy also has **Baltimore Orioles** as well.

**1-25** B. Brooks has **Ruddy Ducks, Widgeons, Hooded Mergansers, and Canvasback** on her pond in NE. Orange County.

**1-28** A bit farther afield in the Sandhills, during this mild winter, Susan Campbell reports a **Summer Tanager** in her yard.



## ...And a Hummer Stunner

Winter hummers in the Triangle, though still scarce, are now routinely reported each season in small numbers. What ISN'T routine is for any of these winter gems to be of the Ruby-throated species (most are Western species). But that's exactly what hummingbird aficionado Susan Campbell found at Tom and Barbara Driscoll's house (CHBC members) last Dec. 12 (the bird had been visiting off-and-on since Nov. 19). He (imm. male) was actively chasing off pesky Goldfinches from the bushes where he was insect-foraging, when Susan captured and banded him.

## Jordan Lake Christmas Count

-- from compiler Norm Budnitz

The Jordan Lake (NC) Christmas Bird Count was held on January 1, 2006—a mild winter day with mostly clear skies, moderate temperatures, and no precipitation. Our counters identified 92 species, right

on our average of 92 for the preceding ten years. Our total of 21,500 individual birds was down a bit from last year. The number of Ring-billed Gulls has become the major determining factor in this grand total. Since that number is an estimate and requires adjustment for overlapping observations by several counters, there is probably no real significance to this number varying by a thousand birds or so. We had 55 birders (10-year average: 61) in 24 parties (average: 22) who counted for 135 party-hours (average: 143). That's approximately 159 birds per party-hour (average: 138).

We found a few unusual species this year, including one new to the count. Two parties reported single Fish Crows—Harry and Sandra Shoffner, and Josh Southern, Sterling Southern, and Brian Strong. After seeing and hearing the bird, Harry actually played a Fish Crow call on his iPod, and the crow responded by flying toward him. Nice use of technology to confirm an ID that is not an easy one. This species has become more and more common in our area over the past decade, especially in the warmer months. In recent years, it has extended its presence both later in the fall and earlier in the spring. It now seems to have closed the gap. With Common Ravens being sighted in the area, how long will it be until we will report three members of the *Corvus* genus in our count circle? The other unusual species seen this winter:

- Northern Pintail—one male reported by Walton Haywood, Herman Knieriem, and Mary Tripodi. This is the first record for this species since 1988.
- Northern Bobwhite—Anson Cooke, Harriet Sato, and Bob Winstead flushed a covey of 15; Brian Bockhahn and Kent Fiala also turned up 3. We have not hit double figures for this species since 1994.
- Great Egret—Rick Payne and Phil Manning. This is the first winter record for this species since 1984. Like the Fish Crow, this species seems to be hanging around in our area longer and longer throughout the year.
- Merlin—Kyle Mills and Micky Mills. This is only the third report in the past 10 years.
- Red-breasted Nuthatch—seen and heard by Harold Carter, the fourth report in the past 10 years.
- Orange-crowned Warbler—Josh Southern, Sterling Southern, and Brian Strong. This is the second report of this species in the past 10 years. Orange-crowns seem to be in the area; they were reported on the Durham and Chapel Hill counts as well.
- Black-and-white Warbler—Patsy Bailey, Norm Budnitz, and Carol Williamson. This is only the third winter record in the past decade.

Notable numbers. Six new record highs this year: Canada Goose—388 (previous high was 353 in 2000); Red-bellied Woodpecker—186 (169 in 2002); Hairy Woodpecker—26 (23 in 2002); Eastern Phoebe—93 (63 in 1993); White-breasted Nuthatch—56 (52 in 2004); Chipping Sparrow—325 (288 in 1994). An interesting miss this year was Wood Duck. Hmmm.

Kudos. Two parties copped the honors for total species this year: Brian Bockhahn and Kent Fiala, and Andy Upshaw, Rouse Wilson and Sue Wilson topped the species count with 53.

For the record: We had 55 birders in 24 parties. We put

in 135 party hours (106 on foot, 27 by car, 1.5 by bicycle), 261 miles (86 on foot, 165 by car, 10 by bicycle), and 3 hours and 6 miles owling. The weather was mild (30°F to 65°F) with winds calm. The sky was mostly clear, with short periods of scattered clouds.

There was no precipitation and no ice coverage.

## And Christmases Past

While we're waiting on the compilation of the latest Chapel Hill Christmas count for the newsletter we can take a trip down memory lane (well, not likely any of OUR memories) to see what they found on the 1939 Chapel Hill count. Awhile back, Cynthia Fox received this old report from one of her customers (Eastgate Wild Bird Center). And here is some of what they found on that year's count in our fair village: "There were a total of 6 counters, with a total species count of 68. These six individuals counted all day and did so within a 3-mile radius of Chapel Hill. Among the census were the following numbers: pied-billed grebe - 1; great blue heron - 2; mallard duck - 35; black duck - 30; redheaded duck - 1; ring-necked duck - 5; canvasback - 3; lesser scaup - 20; bufflehead - 2; hooded merganser - 10; turkey vulture - 12; Cooper's hawk - 1; red-tailed hawk - 1; red-shouldered hawk - 6; marsh hawk (northern harrier) - 2; sparrow hawk (kestrel) - 2; bob-white - 21; killdeer - 22; Wilson's snipe - 10; mourning dove - 28; screech owl - 1; great horned owl - 1; barred owl - 1; belted kingfisher - 2; flicker - 21; pileated woodpecker - 1; red bellied woodpecker - 6; red-headed woodpecker - 6; yellow-bellied sapsucker - 8; hairy woodpecker - 7; downy woodpecker - 16; phoebe - 6; blue jay - 33; crow - 49; Carolina chickadee - 47; tufted titmouse - 44; white-breasted nuthatch - 20; brown-headed nuthatch - 4; brown creeper - 10; winter wren - 3; Carolina wren - 64; mockingbird - 14; catbird - 2; brown thrasher - 1; hermit thrush - 25; bluebird - 77; golden crowned kinglet - 100; ruby-crowned kinglet - 17; cedar waxwing - 3; shrike - 3; starling - 42; myrtle warbler (yellow-rumped warbler) - 63; pine warbler - 18; house sparrow - 23; meadowlark - 97; red-winged blackbird - 105; rusty blackbird - 1; cardinal - 86; purple finch - 10; goldfinch - 67; towhee - 17; savannah sparrow - 1; junco - 468; field sparrow - 78; white-throated sparrow - 600; fox sparrow - 6, swamp sparrow - 165, song sparrow - 268. The count resulted in 68 species, with 2912 individuals counted."

## Buying Binocs...

There are a dizzying array of binoculars available now when one is in the market for a new pair. Making a choice can be daunting, especially for the novice birder. Often beginners assume that magnification or optical quality is the only important consideration when purchasing a pair, but many other factors come in to play, and will vary from one individual to the next. I've edited/adapted the following list of 'tips' from

***Field trips, counts, meetings/talks, webpage, newsletter, checklists, fun, knowledge... your Chapel Hill Bird Club!***

David Bird's **The Bird Almanac** that I think are helpful when shopping for that 'ideal' pair:

1. try to buy the best quality you can afford
  2. buy binocs that suit the sort of birding you will mostly use them for (rugged, backyard, marine, etc.).
- For small and fast moving birds, quick-focus and wide field-of-view features will be helpful (for larger and slower birds, like waterfowl and raptors these features may be less important, although a wide field-of-view in particular can often be helpful to a beginning birder).
3. Be sure the binoculars feel good, ergonomically in your hands, both in terms of shape, texture, and size, and also in terms of their weight, both in hands and around neck. Binocs weighing 24 oz. or more may be too cumbersome for some.
  4. If interested in studying insects/butterflies, close focus (8 ft. or less) may be an important feature to look for.
  5. magnification from 7 to 10 is generally preferred (anything higher tending to create blur from hand-shake, and also having less field-of-view).
  6. zoom binoculars usually offer *lower* quality optics and reduced field-of-view.
  7. "fully multi-coated" optics cut glare and reduce light loss.
  8. eyeglass wearers generally need binocs with a minimum of 15mm of eye relief.
  9. fully waterproof binocs are more expensive, but desirable if you plan to bird on water a lot, or otherwise in wet conditions. Custom fitted rainguards are a nice additional feature, as well.
  10. if you intend to bird a lot at dusk or in other low light conditions look at binocs with greater light gathering capacities.
  11. if possible try out any binoculars you are considering outdoors before making a purchase.

There is also much helpful information on the internet if you're in the market for binocs, or visit one of the local specialty stores where you can get personal service in making a good selection. There simply is no one best binocular for everyone... or for all situations.

#### CHBC Contacts (ph., email) :

- >President: *Joe Bearden*, 884-9050, chickadeebirders@earthlink.net
- >Vice-Pres.(RDU): *Karen Bearden*, 884-9050,  
chickadeebirders@earthlink.net
- >Vice-Pres. (Chapel Hill): *Judy Murray*, 942-2985,  
jmurray@unc.edu
- >Secretary: *Amalie Tuffin*, 641-8072, amaliet@post.harvard.edu
- >Treasurer: *Ruth Roberson*, 489-4888, ruth-roberson@nc.rr.com
- >Field Trip Chairman: *Doug Shadwick*, 942-0479,  
dougshadwick@aol.com
- >Refreshments Chair: *Karen Piplani*, 929-6553,  
k\_piplani@alumni.unc.edu
- >CHBC webmaster, checklist, and CH Xmas count compiler:  
*Will Cook*, 382-9134, cwcook@duke.edu
- >Newsletter Editor: *Rob Gluck*, 967-3134, thrush@hotmail.com

Will Cook's homepage is an excellent general source of birding and nature-related links/resources:

<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook>

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## Reading Corner

For the NON-weekend warriors out there, **City Birding: True Tales of Birds and Birdwatching In Unexpected Places** is an anthology of quirky birding experiences in various urban settings, with a nice array of contributors including Kenn Kaufman, Clay Sutton, Marie Winn, Julie Zickefoose, and Lawrence Kilham, among others.

## -- Looking For a Few Good Men or Women --

Several of the current Club officers intend to step down at the end of their current term. If you're interested in serving the Club in an official capacity (or just want to get more information) please let one of the officers know so they can be planning ahead for a new slate of officers come spring.

## Let's Go Blogging!

Personal weblogs on the internet have exploded worldwide in the last few years (something like 40 million at last count), so it's not too surprising that there are several dozen focussed primarily or largely on birds. If you've never checked out 'blogs,' below are just a few of the many available that offer varying styles and perspectives; one just might catch your fancy:

<http://www.birderblog.com>  
<http://www.10000birds.com>  
<http://birdchaser.blogspot.com>  
<http://nuthatch.typepad.com/ba/>  
<http://www.beakspeak.com>  
<http://www.birdigiscoping.com/blog.html>

## Parting Words...

"Look at everything as though you were seeing it for the first time... or last time. Then your time on earth will be filled with glory."

~Betty Smith

