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

To :

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No. 4

>> **NEXT PROGRAM: Monday, Apr. 24**
"South African Birding"

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.

Who/What: Birder/traveller/raconteur/former New Hope Audubon President and all-around-good-guy Tom Driscoll and wife Barbara will tell us about birds seen on a trip to South Africa, including the Capetown, Kruger National Park, and northeast coast/St. Lucia wetlands areas. The travelogue will also include pictures from Robbens Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 20+ years, and the wine country where French Huguenots first introduced grapes several hundred years ago.

And More Mackin....

If you enjoyed Dr. Will Mackin's talk in March on tropical seabirds, or, if you missed it and want to play catch-up, you can go to his website to see more of what his work is all about: <http://www.unc.edu/~mackin>

~ 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 (Apr. 22 will be the LAST regular Sat. outing of season prior to the start of spring counts). 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.

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

"We need the tonic of wildness."

~ Thoreau

Get Out Your Pads & Sharpen Your Pencils...

It's spring bird enumerating time once again and opportunities abound below to participate in this yearly tradition. Spring bird counts, dates, and contacts for the nearby areas are listed below (so sign up soon and sign up often!):

Chapel Hill, Saturday, 6 May 2006
Contact: Will Cook, cwcook@duke.edu, (919)382-9134

Durham, Sunday, 30 April 2006
Contact: Mike Schultz, ross.gull@verizon.net, (919)490-6761

Falls Lake, Monday, 1 May 2006
Christmas - Wednesday, 3 January 2007
Contact: Brian Bockhahn, Brian.Bockhahn@ncmail.net or cbockhahn4@earthlink.net, (919)676-1027

Jordan Lake, Sunday, 7 May 2006
Contact: Carol Williamson, cncbrdr@yahoo.com, (919)383-2364

Kerr Lake, Tuesday, 2 May 2006
Contact: Brian Bockhahn, Brian.Bockhahn@ncmail.net or cbockhahn4@earthlink.net, (919)676-1027

Raleigh/Wake County, Saturday, 13 May 2006
Contact: John Connors, John.Connors@ncmail.net, 919-755-0253 (h)

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

Maury Graves has led a varied life and is another one of our longest term members, having joined the Bird Club in the mid-70's shortly after moving to Chapel Hill. Maury grew up on a farm in Illinois where his birding interest began, but he withdrew from the family farming tradition to attend the Univ. of Illinois prior to military service during which he spent his first years in North Carolina. After World War II, including paratrooper training, he completed his education as a meteorologist and began working for an airlines in South America, where he spent the next 11 years. Later he did research at the Univ. of Michigan, before working on NASA space shuttle subcontracts in Huntsville, AL., before finally working as a statistician in our own RTP, analyzing air pollution data. He retired in 1988, and now resides at Carolina Meadows where there is an active birding group. There he gets to watch Purple Martins return every spring to their man-made homes, as well as help with spring and winter bird counts. One of his sons, Steve, was also very active with CHBC in the past and is known to many members.

Besides birding, other of Maury's interests include music (playing and singing), reading, and sign language. In 1990, on the occasion of CHBC's approximate 50th anniversary, Maury wrote a Club history which is still available on the Chapel Hill Bird Club website run by Will Cook. And speaking of anniversaries, if you happen to run into Maury sometime this September be sure and wish him a happy one as it will mark his own 59-year anniversary to wife Marie!

CHBC Wants YOU!!

Several of the Bird Club's current officers, having served loyally and with distinction for several years, wish to step down at the end of this season (*SOON!*). If you have an interest in serving the Club in some capacity PLEASE get in touch with one of the officers ASAP to let them know or to gather more information. And you DON'T have to be a top-notch birder to be an officer; primary duties involve organizing/planning or running the monthly meetings.

-- Of Heronries and Marionettes --

Twenty years ago Triangle birders used to wonder where Great Blue Herons went during the breeding season. No more... increasingly in the last decade local heronries with anywhere from a few to several dozen nests have been found throughout the Triangle. Several

of these are around the Jordan Lake area, and here was Mike Swaim's recent description of one of them from 'Carolinabirds' :

"The safest one to see from right off the road is where Hinton road intersects Farrington Point Rd. (aka Mt. Caramel Church Rd.) Pull off onto Hinton, which is just past the powerline cutover where Farrington meets Mt. Caramel Church Rd, and park just past the No Outlet sign on Hinton, making sure your car is well off the road, but not into the bog ditch. From there, if you look back across Farrington Point Road into the swamp area, you'll clearly see Great Blue Herons on their nests. You do NOT need to even cross over to the side of Farrington Point Rd where the nests are. You can see at least 9 of them from the grassy shoulder of Hinton road with nothing more than 8x binos, if you walk back towards the intersection and peer around a little. Obviously, have some respect for the birds and don't go any closer than you have to, and don't bother them... They're so goofy. When they fly up to the nests, right before they light, it doesn't look so much like a real bird as a badly done marionette of a bird badly controlled by hidden strings. And seeing these gawky, kind of prehistoric looking birds perched precariously in flimsy twig nests in trees is a hoot that even non-birders may find amusing."

-- From the 'What Will They Think Of Next' Dept. --

Like everything else in life, birding is going more and more high-tech. Tom Krakauer on Carolinabirds brought attention to a new product, "Song Sleuth, birdsong digital detective," a small box-like device you point toward a singing bird in the field and the bird is digitally ID'ed. Here is part of what an internet site for the product has to say:

"Song Sleuth is the most exciting birding aid to come along ever. It's the only device that lets you identify birdsongs in the field in real time. Just power-up and aim Song Sleuth in the direction of a birdsong. In seconds, the software analyzes, identifies and rank-orders the prime suspects and displays the results. Song Sleuth uniquely combines the latest advancements in signal processing hardware and software and digital directional microphone technology with authentic birdsong recordings from the world-renowned Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. There's never been a birdsong detective like Song Sleuth. It's not a mere birdsong dictionary or flashcard pack. It's a totally new high-tech tool for birders at all levels."

Price: about \$400.

Some March Sightings Highlights

3/2 - Brief but wonderful report from T. Driscoll of a dozen or more **Sandhill Cranes** flying overhead while he was driving on I-40! Uhhh... I hesitate to say it, but even while driving it can be worth looking UP!!

3/9 - S. Campbell reports that K. Anthony has already had a male **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** appear in her Raleigh yard... fighting for feeder rights with the overwintering Rufous H. Ms. Anthony had this season.

3/10 - In further signs of an early spring S. Cash hears **Fish Crows** over the Stagecoach Rd. area of south Durham, and J.M. Lynch has a **Yellow-throated Warbler** in Chatham County already.

3/12 - S. Cash reports a single **Purple Martin** in Chatham County and H. Mueller has an **Indigo Bunting** in his Chapel Hill yard.

3/17 - Will Cook and Ginger Travis find **Blue-headed Vireos, Yellow-throated Warblers, and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** while canoeing Jordan Lake. Two days later S. Cash finds 2 **Yellow-throated Warblers** near Stagecoach Rd., one of their usual early haunts.

3/26 - J.M. Lynch counts 56 (!) nests at a heronry off Jordan Lake.

By the end of March the usual spring migrants were beginning to appear at various locales through the Triangle, often a few days earlier than usual following our relatively mild winter.

Bird Flu In the News

Since spring migration got underway hardly a day has passed without a news story on bird flu. The deadly disease (H5N1 virus) is expected to enter American borders this year from wild birds, as it spreads worldwide. The looming question is whether it can be kept out of domestic (farm) bird populations, and whether the virus will mutate to facilitate human-to-human transmission. Scientists are rapidly working on vaccines to cover that eventuality. It is almost insidiously ironic that the birds we so love can reek such havoc in our lives, just as we as a species, intentionally or not, so often reek havoc in their lives. . . .

-- Summer Ventures --

Simon Thompson leads excellent birding tours for his company "VENTURES" throughout the Carolinas and the world. He has several coming up in May in the Carolinas that may interest you (the majority before May are already fully-booked), as well as more worldly outings later in year. Check them out at:

<http://www.birdventures.com>

Book Look

Once again there are several new bird-related books in the stores this month. Most Club members are probably hummingbird lovers, and it's that time of year, so I'll first mention a delightful gem of a book (wonderful photos) for adults and youngsters alike called **First Flight: A Mother Hummingbird's Story**, by Noriko and Don Carroll -- check it out. A second mention goes to **Songbird Journey**, by Miyoko Chu, another treatment of the fascinating topic of bird migration.

A long-awaited new edition of **Birds of The Carolinas** (Potter, Parnell, Teulings, Davis) is now out and certainly ought to be a part of every NC birder's bookshelf.

Lastly, I'll note that Tim Gallagher's timely work, **The Grail Bird**, on the original Arkansas Ivory-bill story, is now out in paperback if you didn't already get the hardback version. Speaking of which. . . .

The Ivory-bill Update???

At this point one can only wonder what the final conclusion of this incredible journey on the Ivory-bill roller-coaster will be... if there even is a conclusion! In March, the renowned David Sibley with others published a long-awaited rebuttal to Cornell's original **SCIENCE** paper, arguing that the bird in the famous David Luneau video is most probably a normal Pileated Woodpecker. Cornell offered a spirited rebuttal to Sibley in the very same issue supporting their original conclusions. (They will present their final summary of the current search season sometime in May.) Seldom has American ornithology witnessed such a battle of titans as it were, with so many big name players lining up on both sides of an issue... or, still fence-sitting; and with less than a month left in this search season, the skeptics likely now have the upper-hand in the arena of public opinion. We just might have the makings here of a great future Hollywood or made-for-TV movie! (or at the very least one is left to wonder what the long-term effects on the birding community may be from the whole affair if there is no final resolution?) Stay tuned....

HEYYYYY!!

Another reminder: IF your mailing label says "Jan 06" your membership dues have EXPIRED and you need to use the form on last page to **renew** for another year, and keep receiving this fine newsletter ; -) Thanks! (*Note:* if you've renewed recently your mailing label may not yet reflect it.)

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More Mixed-up Birds

Back by popular demand (...okay, space-filler), re-arrange the following letter-strings to make a bird name:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. raldlam | 5. bigdrink |
| 2. milner | 6. hangian |
| 3. virnbode | 7. rocmarton |
| 4. thanchut | 8. nineglards |

(answers at end of *Bulletin*)

IF

If you hear the word “primaries” and immediately think of feathers instead of elections... chances are, you’re a birder!

~ The Hummingbird ~

The sunlight speaks! And it's voice is a bird:
It glitters half-guessed, half-seen, half-heard
Above the flower bed. Over the lawn ...
A flashing dip and it is gone.
And all it lends to the eye is this --
A sunbeam giving the air a kiss.

-- Harry Kemp

Birding and War

If you find birds in faraway places of great interest you’ll likely enjoy “Birding Babylon,” a weblog run by an American soldier stationed in Iraq. Oddly enough, it is one of the most consistently interesting and best-written bird blogs around. Somehow it’s re-assuring that even in the tragedy of war people can find birds fascinating and make time to appreciate their presence.

<http://birdingbabylon.blogspot.com/>

“Carolinabirds”

Several new members have joined the Club in the last year, including a number of folks new to the Triangle area. For any of you not already plugged into it, “carolinabirds” is the internet listserv group that serves birders in North and South Carolina (it has more members from the Triangle than any other area and is run by our own Will Cook). It’s a must for anyone wishing to keep abreast of area birding news in a timely manner. Learn how to subscribe here:

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

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~~ Membership Form ~~

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

Name _____

Address _____

ph _____

email _____

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**

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>

Parting Words...

“Whenever we try to isolate anything in nature, we find it is hitched to everything else in the universe.”

~ John Muir

~~~~~ }

### ‘Mixed-up Birds’ answers:

- 1. mallard, 2. merlin, 3. ovenbird, 4. nuthatch, 5. kingbird,
- 6. anhinga, 7. cormorant, 8. sanderling