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THE BULLETIN...
Chapel Hill Bird Club
February 2007
<http://chbc.carolinanature.com>

To :

Vol. 36

No. 2

>> Upcoming Meeting: Monday, Feb. 26
“ How Do Birds Sing and Why Does It Matter? ”

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: The last few years have seen a remarkable number of popular books appear on the topic of birdsong. It is a subject that birders and non-birders alike find fascinating. So it is a timely treat that Dr. Steve Nowicki from the Duke Depts. of Biology, Psychology, and Neurobiology, and one of our area’s top avian researchers, will be telling us about his findings on this very hot topic in the bird world.

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.

-- Renewals, Renewals --

IF your mailing label says “Jan 07” or “Feb 07” then it’s time to renew your membership to the Bird Club. Please send your \$15 renewal to:

Patsy Bailey, 277 Mint Springs Rd., Pittsboro, NC 27312

(IF you renewed **recently** your mailing label may not yet reflect it.)

==> Taaaalk to me... if you’re interested in taking over the *Bulletin* (no takers, as yet) -- won’t need to actually put out your first edition ‘til next Sept. so plenty of time to prepare, and ours is a fairly simple newsletter to produce. Call me at 967-3134 or email:
thrush@hotmail.com

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

“Every bird is a Japanese haiku, and every insect a Zen koan.”
~ *Anonymous*

Successful CHBC Coastal Trip

CHBC’s MLK weekend outing to the coast was another success and far balmier than usual. Among species’ highlights were Surf and Black Scoters and Long-tailed Duck at Swan Quarters, 1000s of Red-heads, a Whimbrel (Cape Point area), 2 American Bitterns (Pea and Bodie Island), dozens of Am. White Pelicans, Long-billed Dowitchers, 3 Common Golden-eye, a Great Cormorant, and Eurasian Wigeon. Thanks to Doug S. for offering this field trip every year. If you’ve never made it before you may want to mark your calendars now for it *next* year, although I don’t think Doug can promise the same weather again.

Counts, Counts, Counts...

Chapel Hill Christmas count data will probably be in the next newsletter, but several other count summaries to pass along here (and thanks to all participants who make these counts so successful):

-- Jordan Lake Christmas Count --

(compiler Norm Budnitz)

The Jordan Lake (NC) Christmas Bird Count was held on December 31, 2006—a mild winter day with overcast skies, moderate temperatures, and no precipitation. Counters identified 91 species, just shy of our average of 92 for the preceding ten years. Our total of 27,240 individual birds was a new high. Though our estimated number of Ring-billed Gulls (5,000) was down a bit from previous years, our record number of American Coots (2,270) took up the slack.

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

We had 58 birders (10-year average: 60) in 26 parties (average: 23) who counted for 149 party-hours (average: 145). That's approximately 183 birds per party-hour, a new high (average: 143).

Unusual species:

Mark Johns spent a couple of hours in a boat fishing and birding and reported 1 Osprey, 1 Great Black-backed Gull, and 2 Fish Crows. The Osprey was our first Christmas Count record since 1991. Sterling Southern also reported a Fish Crow. Last year was the first time we had this species on the count. Betty King, Barbara Roth, Peg Schultz, and Judy Teague found 1 Spotted Sandpiper. We first recorded winter Spotties in 2003. And Patsy Bailey and Norm Budnitz found a Merlin.

Notable numbers. We had a remarkable number of record highs this year:

Species -- new high (previous high, year):

Canada Goose--420 (388, 2005)
 Wood Duck--32 (30, 1995)
 Black Vulture--157 (131, 1997)
 American Coot--2,270 (1,113, 2000)
 Red-bellied Woodpecker--206 (186, 2005)
 Downy Woodpecker--142 (125, 1999)
 Hairy Woodpecker--30 (26, 2005)
 Fish Crow--3 (2, 2005)
 Brown-headed Nuthatch--218 (156, 2004)
 House Wren--7 (4, several years)
 Northern Mockingbird--86 (83, 1995)
 Common Yellowthroat--5 (4, several years)
 Fox Sparrow--59 (44, 1998)
 Red-winged Blackbird--3,204 (1,545, 1997)
 Common Grackle--2,532 (1,134, 1995)

The warmth of Harris Lake may be at least one factor in the large number of Coots reported by Angelo Capparella and Will Cook. Tom Krakauer and John Stellwagen observed what they described as "an enormous congregation Nuthatches." They watched a continuous mixed flock of Kinglets, Chickadees, Pine Warblers, and Brown-headed Nuthatches as the birds flew across a road for about 10 minutes. And Jennifer Maher, Robin Moran, and Judy Murray watched a large flock of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles.

A few notable MISSES for our count:

Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Screech-Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Blue-headed Vireo

Kudos. Tom Driscoll and Phil Warren copped the honors for total species this year with 59, followed closely by Angelo Capparella and Will Cook with 57.

-- Falls Lake Christmas Count --

(compiler Brian Bockhahn)

The 9th Falls Lake Christmas Bird Count was held on

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

January 3, 2007. An average of 23 participants found 94 species including two on count week. This is above our average of 90 species (95 is the record). Total birds were low at 34,910, due to lack of waterfowl and low numbers on most winter birds.

There were three species new to the count. Two Common Ravens were seen at the Henson Quarry on US 1 by David Lenat, who found them first while scouting the area. This is new to the CBC and the entire Falls Lake watershed, bringing the checklist to 294 species. The other new CBC bird was an Orange-crowned Warbler seen during count week by feeder counter Julie Keefer. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was reported for the FIRST time by Gordon Brown, it's been a count week bird once in the past. Amazing FOURTH count records include single Rufous Hum-mingbirds at two separate feeders, Kay Anthony's and Julie Stewart's. Good things come in twos, David Lenat and Brian Bockhahn each found a single Lincoln's Sparrow, FOURTH. Deck Stapleton found our FOURTH count records for Rusty Blackbird and Common Grackle. John Connors found our FOURTH Loggerhead Shrike in it's becoming reliable spot near Camp Kanata. Other goodies were Palm Warbler, Wilson's Snipe and Lesser Scaup. 26,179 Ring-billed Gulls was about average for the weather. Lesser and Greater Black-backed Gulls were found on the main lake but not the landfill. The only a-list miss was Ring-necked Duck. Wild Turkey was not reported on count day but seen during count week.

-- 2006 Chatham County FALL Count --

(compiler Will Cook; tabular data attached)

The 11th Chatham County Fall Migration Count on 9/16/2006 wasn't as spectacular as last year's, but the counting weather was pleasant and the birds were active, some singing. Last year we had mudflats and loads of shorebirds, the two years before that some tropical-storm-blown birds, but this year was just typical fall birding. The lake level was a foot above normal, so this year there were no mudflats and very few shorebirds to be found. It started off foggy, but the fog cleared, then turned breezy. We ended with 98 species (4 below average) and counted 4037 individuals (560 above average), high, considering that observer effort was below average (66.2 party-hours, average 72.1) and few large flocks were seen. The number of birds per party-hour (61.0) is well above average (53.9).

Though not unexpected, Savannah Sparrow was new to the count this year - Amalie Tuffin found one in a corn field. Other goodies included Laughing Gull (our second) and good numbers of Caspian Terns seen by Will Cook's team; 3 Black Tern (also a second) and a Forster's Tern seen by Steve Shultz; Doug Shadwick heard five singing Acadian Flycatchers (our third) in the Cape Fear River area in the southeastern part of the county; Amalie Tuffin found 3 Eastern Kingbirds (our

third); and three parties reported Cedar Waxwings (our third). (The Cape Fear area must be really good for Empids - last year Jeff Phippen covered it and found three Empidonax flycatchers of three different species!)

We set 16 record highs: 59 Black Vultures (average 20), 186 Turkey Vultures (103), 23 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (11), 19 Hairy Woodpeckers (9.5), 28 Eastern Wood-Pewees (12), 5 Acadian Flycatchers (0.3), 41 Eastern Phoebe (17), 3 Eastern Kingbirds (0.2), 34 White-eyed Vireos (13), 232 Carolina Wrens (150), 5 Swainson's Thrushes (1.3), 4 Yellow Warblers (1.0), 35 Summer Tanagers (16), 67 Chipping Sparrows (19), 34 Blue Grosbeaks (15), and 13 Eastern Meadowlarks (1.9).

No record lows, but the total of 1 Wood Thrush is not encouraging. The average over the last 10 years of the count is 6, but just 1.4 for the last 5 counts. The only big miss was Rock Pigeon. Warblers were a little below average, with 17 species and 285 individuals (79 non-Pines, average 134). Shorebirds were scarce - the total of 5 individuals (2 species) is our lowest ever. Last year we had the best showing ever - what a difference a 3.2' rise in lake level makes!

Teams with the highest counts: Once again Will Cook's party, covering the NC 751 and Farrington Road areas, came in first in both species (60) and individuals (840), squeaking by Doug Shadwick's party (59 species, 427 birds).

Effort: 17 counters in 12 parties. 66.2 party hours (53.7 foot, 12.5 car), 191.5 party miles (38.5 foot, 153 car). Owling 3 hours, 23 miles. Stationary (feeder watch) 2 hours.

Weather: temp 59-79F, wind NE 0-15mph, no precip, fog in morning, then clearing, lake level 217.0'.

----- -- Australia Report --

Thanks to birder/traveller Tom Driscoll for this report of his experience in bird-haven Australia (specifically, Central New South Wales):

In September 2006, Barbara and I went to Australia. The first province we went to was New South Wales which is a very big province and home to many Australians, as well as Sydney, Australia's largest city. We had been to Sydney and had seen many good birds in the city (visit the Royal Botanical Gardens if you go). However, we wanted to see more of the province. We had spent a day in the Blue Mountains (the Aussie equivalent of the Grand Canyon) before, but knew we wanted to spend more time there when we returned. So we rented a car and drove on the wrong side of the road up to the Blue Mountains! We had contacted a guide who agreed to take us out for a day. She asked us what birds we wanted to see and I sent our list of Australian birds that we had

seen. She then arranged a special trip that she usually extends for two or three days.

One of the birds missed on the first trip was a Superb Lyrebird, so we stayed in the mountains for several hours and saw a Superb Lyrebird (unfortunately it wasn't singing). While in the mountains, we also saw a Flame Robin, Brown Thornbill (the first of many we saw), Eastern Rosella (a type of parrot), several species of treecreepers, Laughing Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, Satin Bowerbird, and many others. Because we had not seen many Australian ducks, she took us over the mountains to a small town waste water treatment lagoon. We saw Blue-billed, Musk, Australian Wood, Pink-eared, and White-eyed Ducks. We also saw Gray and Chestnut Teal and Australian Shovelers. We visited nearby Wallace Lake and saw White-bellied Sea-eagle, more ducks, White-faced and Pacific Herons, Purple Swamphen, Masked Lapwing, and others.

Next, she took us to her specialty area, Capertee Valley. Although it was now afternoon, warm, and there had been a drought, we saw many birds there including the rare Regent Honeyeater (we saw 12 species of honeyeater that day). We saw three types of woodswallows, cuckoo-shrikes, songlarks, and bushlarks. We also saw Zebra Finch, Diamond, and Red-browed Firetails which are very beautiful but very small birds. We saw the Restless Flycatcher, Brown Falcon, Australian Kestrel, Little Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, and Australian Kestrel there as well.

We highly recommend our guide, Carol Proberts, who is based in Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, but she knows all the birds of New South Wales. She can be reached at Email: origma@lisp.com.au or, <http://www.bmbirding.com.au>. If you have time while there, check out the Royal National Park.

----- And, You Know You're A Real Birder If...

...you relate to this partial post to 'Carolinabirds' from Jeff Phippen:

"This morning (1/20/2007) Derb Carter called me, basically saying it's cold outside now, let's go stand in the smelly landfill for a few hours in the cold wind listening to the constant beep and grind of dump trucks and stare at gulls. How could I resist? We spent about 3 hours (with permission) at the Wake Co., NC. landfill scanning gulls for something different."

And the 'different' birds they found, out of 1000's of gulls, were a possible hybrid Lesser Black-backed x Herring Gull, and a possible 1st year Thayer's Gull. And ahhh, the bouquet....

2006 CHATHAM COUNTY FALL BIRD COUNT

Species	9/16	notes	BB	KB	WC	TD	FH	TL	JM	JO	DS	AT	AU	PW
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	36				16			4		1	6	9		
Eastern Bluebird	155		3	10	14	7		6	66	10	5	12		22
Swainson's Thrush	5	H		4								1		
Wood Thrush	1							1						
American Robin	41				3				35					3
Gray Catbird	14				1	1		3	3		4	2		
Northern Mockingbird	28			1	3			2	14		5			3
Brown Thrasher	12				2				2		6	1		1
European Starling	67				8				55					4
Cedar Waxwing	7	R		5	1						1			
Tennessee Warbler	3							3						
Northern Parula	6		1		2						2			1
Yellow Warbler	4	H			3								1	
Chestnut-sided Warbler	2				1			1						
Magnolia Warbler	7			2	1			2				2		
Black-throated Blue Warbler	2						1				1			
Black-throated Green Warbler	1										1			
Yellow-throated Warbler	2		1		1									
Pine Warbler	206		28	11	43	60	1	6	14	2	24	10		7
Bay-breasted Warbler	1							1						
Black-and-white Warbler	10			1	4	2		1			1	1		
American Redstart	10			3	3			3		1				
Ovenbird	1								1					
Northern Waterthrush	1		1											
Common Yellowthroat	24			1		8		7	5	1	2			
Hooded Warbler	4										4			
Yellow-breasted Chat	1					1								
Summer Tanager	35	H	6	3	5	2	3		6	1	2	3	1	3
Scarlet Tanager	9		3	1	2			1	1				1	
Eastern Towhee	42			3	14	4		3	9		5	2		2
Savannah Sparrow	1	NC										1		
Chipping Sparrow	67	H	2	1				4	49	4	3			4
Field Sparrow	6					5			1					
Northern Cardinal	226		7	16	34	28	6	26	45	13	24	13	6	8
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3								2		1			
Blue Grosbeak	34	H			9			9	13		3			
Indigo Bunting	94				44			6	23	2	4	15		
Red-winged Blackbird	3											3		
Eastern Meadowlark	13	H							13					
Common Grackle	64						50		8		3	3		
Brown-headed Cowbird	20								20					
Baltimore Oriole	1								1					
House Finch	14			2			2			2	3		3	2
American Goldfinch	204		1		45	11	8	33	28	5	12	24	5	32
TOTAL SPECIES	98		36	36	60	33	17	45	53	29	59	48	21	45
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	4037		183	134	840	356	118	301	818	111	427	408	50	291

Notes: H = Record High, L = Record Low, NC = New to Count, R = Rare

Weather: temp 59-79F, wind NE 0-15mph, no precip, fog in morning, clear in pm, lake level 217.0'

Start	515	700	800	700	740	645	630	600	530	700	830	515
End	1930	1130	1100	1500	1350	1930	1530	1845	1330	1300	930	1245

Parties	12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Individuals	17	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1

2006 CHATHAM COUNTY FALL BIRD COUNT

Species	9/16	notes	BB	KB	WC	TD	FH	TL	JM	JO	DS	AT	AU	PW
Regular Party Hours: Total	66.2		4.5	3	8	6.2	0	10.5	7	7	7	6	1	6
Party Hours: On Foot	53.7		3.5	2.5	7.5	5.95		9.5	1	7	6	5	1	4.75
Party Hours: By Car	12.5		1	0.5	0.5	0.25		1	6		1	1		1.25
Party Hours: By Boat	0													
Party Miles: Total	191.5		10	6.5	9	9	0	22	41	4.5	35	13.5	1	40
Party Miles: On Foot	38.5		3	1.5	4	7		5	1	4.5	5	2.5	1	4
Party Miles: By Car	153		7	5	5	2		17	40		30	11		36
Party Miles: By Boat	0													
Party Hours: Stationary	2							2						
Owling Hours	3								0.5		1			1.5
Owling Miles	23								2		5			16

Area	Party	Party Members
Ebenezer Point, Poplar Point	BB	Brian Bockhahn
White Pines Preserve	KB	Karen and Joe Bearden
NC 751 and Farrington Road areas	WC	Will Cook, Jenny Palmer, Steve Shultz
Old Hope Valley Farm Rd.	TD	Tom Driscoll, Colyer Durovitch
Terrell's Mountain yard area	FH	Fred Houk
Bynum Ridge yard area	TL	Terry Logue
Mount Olive Church Road/Terrells	JM	Judy Murray, Jennifer Maher
Seaforth, home area	JO	Jane Oliver
Cape Fear River, Jordan Dam	DS	Doug Shadwick, Bob Perkins
Big Woods Road	AT	Amalie Tuffin
Jay Shambley Rd, Carolina Hill Rd., etc.	AU	Andy Upshaw
Hank's Chapel - Gum Springs Rd.	PW	Phil Warren

Past Counts

Year	1996	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Date	9/14	9/21	9/20	9/19	9/18	9/16	9/15	9/21	9/20	9/18	9/17	9/16
Species	86	84	99	107	115	107	103	95	98	96	114	98
Birds	1313	1584	3125	3805	4609	3887	4895	3471	3381	2256	3728	4037
Parties	5	7	10	12	13	13	17	9	13	10	11	12
Counters	5	13	14	19	27	23	37	14	17	12	18	17
Party Hours	26.5	31.25	54	70	86.7	88.25	132	53.75	67.25	42.3	68.5	66.2
Birds per Hour	49.55	50.69	57.87	54.36	53.16	44.05	37.08	64.58	50.28	53.33	54.42	60.98