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**To :**

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

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*Vol. 36*

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*No. 5*

>> **LAST MEETING: 5 pm. SUNDAY, May 20**  
~~~ **PICNIC TIME!!!** ~~~

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

**When/Where:** CHANGE OF VENUE! for our end-of-the-season picnic: this year we'll try a **SUNDAY at Duke Forest.**

"Birds have a power unlike anything else in nature... I'll bet those of you with bird feeders get up in the morning and wonder what kinds of birds you'll see in the yard. And I'll bet none of you have the same thought about the kinds of trees you'll find in your yard that day."

~ David Sibley

Specifically, the site will be the Duke Forest R. L. Riggsbee Shelter (Gate F). It includes a picnic shelter with tables, grill, outhouse, volleyball court, and electricity, but no running water. There are trails for birding nearby and the powerline next to Gate F is a favorite butterflying spot.

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**End-of-Year Thanks**

So bring yourself, family (including children), friends, binoculars, and a food dish with enough to share. Please also, bring along your own drink, plate, and utensils.

With May as the last month of official business 'til next September, thanks as always to our officers who make it all happen for you during the year from the field trips, to the meetings, to the refreshments, counts and newsletter.

Directions to the site:

Better yet, all our officers have agreed to stay on board for next year so you can expect more of the same next season! The officer slate, to be officially voted on at the May picnic is:

Follow NC 751 north towards US 70  
Pass Kerley Road  
Gate F will be on the left immediately after Gate 12  
(under the power lines) and before the railroad bridge.

Ruth Roberson -- President  
Karen Bearden and Ginger Travis -- Vice-Presidents  
Amalie Tuffin -- Secretary  
Patsy Bailey -- Treasurer

~ **Saturday Morning Field Trips** ~



Saturday morning field trips are over for this season. Occasionally special summer outings do take place and are usually announced on the "Carolinabirds" listserv. Otherwise, see you again in August or September.

One exception of course is that I, as newsletter editor, still hope to step down before next fall, because the newsletter will suffer if I have to try and get it out for another year given my current time constraints. So, puhh-leeaze, someone come forward and offer your services in that regard (call me at 967-3134 or email: thrush@hotmail.com).

## “Wildathon”

The New Hope Audubon Society “Wildathon” runs through May. For anyone not familiar with this local fundraiser that takes in contributions earmarked for habitat conservation, learn more at this webpage:

<http://www.newhopeaudubon.org/info/wildathon.html>

... and donate \$\$\$ if you're able.

## Birding By Kayak: Getting Started (and now's the time)

[Every year I run into more folks who are taking up kayaking, and CHBC's own Ginger Travis has long touted the joys of combining kayaking with birding, so I asked Ginger to write an introduction to this wonderful form of recreation for any out there who may be thinking about it. *Warning*: her enthusiasm just might be contagious]:

My absolute favorite way to look at birds is from a kayak. It's the most relaxing thing in the world. And here's the thing – it's so easy! No instruction is

needed if you start out in a wide, stable “recreational” kayak (14 feet or under). Just dip one end of your double-bladed paddle in the water, then the other, and off you go! If you rent, buy, or borrow a kayak that's low to the wind, you can tool around Jordan Lake in breezes up to 10 mph without much trouble at all. Pretty soon you'll be doing the spring bird count on Jordan. I started doing the count as soon as I got my first kayak. Heaven!

Here's my advice on getting started:

-- **Rent a kayak** from REI a time or two. See if you like paddling.

--If you like it, **keep trying boats before you buy**. This was the best advice I ever got. I found out there were boats I liked but couldn't even pick up. (You can certainly buy a little set of wheels to put under your kayak to take it to the water – I have a set myself. But you've got to be able to lift at least the end of your kayak to get it up on top of your car, and you really should be able to shoulder-carry your boat for at least a few yards.) The good news is that they're making plastic kayaks lighter than they used to – as light as 35 pounds or so for a 10-footer.

-- **Attend a demo day**. Call REI and Great Outdoor Provision Co. and ask them when demo days are scheduled. GOPC has free demos fairly frequently at

Lake Crabtree. They put out all the kayak models they sell, and you can hop in every boat and try it out. No commitment is needed on your part – this is a great way to find out how different boats feel and how much they weigh. There's no need to feel self-conscious – lots of people will be there, mostly beginners, happily jumping in and out of boats.

-- **Be realistic** about what you want a kayak for. If you want it for birding and you're just starting paddling, you're probably better off with a plastic recreational kayak rather than a gorgeous, sleek, long sea kayak (16 to 18 feet). Sea kayaks require a lot more technique, and they're less stable; you need some instruction to safely paddle one. Look for recreational kayaks made by these manufacturers: Perception, Wilderness Systems, Dagger, Old Town, and Hurricane.

-- If you seriously like kayaking, you might **consider buying a roof rack** before you ever get a boat. That way you can safely transport rental boats while you decide what to buy. Some friends of mine did this – not a bad idea.

-- **Sign up for beginner trips** offered by Frog Hollow Outdoors ([www.froghollowoutdoors.com](http://www.froghollowoutdoors.com)), a good local outfitter. They provide instruction.

How much does it cost to get started? About the same as buying decent binoculars. For example, GOPC sometimes has starter deals: a plastic kayak plus paddle for about \$350. Or, for \$800 to \$1,100 you can buy a pretty nice plastic starter boat, a reasonably light paddle, and a good life vest. And you might spend about \$200 for a real roof rack – plus a few bucks for foam saddles to go on the bars and straps to tighten your boat down. And that's it. (Actually, I'm kidding: it's only the start. Boating is a disease!)

For really light boats you might consider inflatables. I once paddled a \$250 Stearns. It leaked air, and it wasn't real comfortable, but I went a mile or two and saw some birds. There are also folding boats where you assemble a frame and slip a fabric skin over it – Pakboats ([www.pakboats.com](http://www.pakboats.com)) is one dealer with some very lightweight, short kayaks. Intriguing, but not available locally.

Two last thoughts:

Always wear your life vest.

And if you get a boat, call me and we'll go paddling/birding: 942-7746.

See you on the water!



## "Celebrate Urban Birds!"

*From Cornell's Lab of Ornithology:*

Amid the concrete jungle of cities, nature can be resilient -- given the chance. Urban parks, gardens, and other green areas can host a surprising diversity of birds -- whether colorful resident pigeons and adaptable hawks, or far-flung travelers such as warblers and orioles looking for a place to rest during journeys of thousands of miles.

During May 10-13, 2007, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology invites city residents to "Celebrate Urban Birds!" through activities such as gardening, bird watching, art, and science. These events will raise awareness about birds in the city and help scientists learn how birds use urban habitats.

People of all ages and backgrounds can participate in any way they wish, on their own or with local organizations. To aid scientists, they can watch city birds for at least 10 minutes, check off 15 target species of birds, and send the information through the mail or the Internet to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Urban Birds Studies project.

"It is vital that we understand how birds are affected by available urban green spaces, including parks, rooftop gardens, and even potted plants on balconies," says project leader Karen Purcell. "Bringing people's attention to urban nature is essential for global conservation awareness and efforts to help birds."

More than 100 organizations will host special events as part "Celebrate Urban Birds," including schools, public gardens, nature centers, museums, and parks. People are also invited to join activities on their own. While supplies last, everyone who signs up will receive a Celebration Kit in English and Spanish with a colorful urban birds poster, educational materials about birds and urban greening, data form, and packet of sunflower seeds to plant in pots and gardens.

Learn more and sign up at:

[www.urbanbirds.org/celebration](http://www.urbanbirds.org/celebration).

Despite the dramatic increase in urbanization, we can still help the birds and connect with nature. Join the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and "Celebrate Urban Birds!"

## Nope, Can't Say I Ever Seen One-a-dem...

In an internet thread on "BirdChat" last month entitled "Birds I'd *Like* to See" folks contributed names of birds they had seen or heard in the past somewhere that...well...just weren't quite right. Here were a few of the entries:

Garbled Modwits  
Duffleheads  
Startlings  
Wide-winged Crossbills  
Vermin Flycatchers  
Common Oystercracker  
Ruffled Grouse

...sorta makes me long to see a Pileated Peckerwood!!

## Couple of Returning Birds

For only the third time, a Snowy Plover was sighted in N.C., this time at the north end of Wrightsville Beach in early April and seen by many subsequently.

Closer to home, the male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has returned to Hobby Field in Southern Pines; by the time you read this the female will likely have joined him.

And not so much returning as encroaching, a Eurasian Collared Dove was spied near Burlington by Mike Tove on April 24th. With this spreading species established to the east of us and to the west of us, how long before at least a few of these invaders are residential in the Triangle?

## Book Corner

Sorry to send you into summer on a pessimistic note but **Silence of the Songbirds** by scientist Bridget Stutchbury appears to be an important account of what is happening to migratory songbirds worldwide, namely they are disappearing at an alarming rate. The book recounts the various causes and possible corrective measures that can be taken, and what the failure to do so may mean for the fate of humans.

For those who want a little lighter reading fare there is **Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches?** by Mike O'Connor, that proposes to answer the questions you've always wanted ask about birds.

Lastly, on an uplifting note, I'll throw in **The Wild Trees**, by the excellent writer Richard Preston. Not a bird volume, but an account of the 2000+ year-old giant Redwoods of California and the scientists who study them. From the reviews I've seen it looks to be a wonderful and inspiring read.

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

-- Fun Facts --

(from **The Bird Almanac** by David Bird)

The smallest clutch size of any bird species belongs to Albatrosses laying one egg every two years, and the largest recorded clutch size was 28 by a Bobwhite Quail.



**Swift Science**

In a study published in **Nature**, scientists performed experiments in wind tunnels to explain how Swifts are able to fly so fast for so long, eating, sleeping, and even mating on the wing. The ability stems from "wing morphing" or changing the shape of their wings to expend the least amount of energy necessary for a given maneuver. NASA is studying the findings to adapt the information to their own design of new flight vehicles and robotic surveillance craft.

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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:

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

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**Birding Tip of the Day**

Club member Judith Fortney passed this along to me recently, and it can be useful under some circumstances. You're driving along and suddenly pass a bird on a fencepost, or wire, or tree off the side of the road that looks interesting. It's not possible or practical to make a U-turn, but you do pull off to the side of the road up ahead. Getting out and walking back though is a nuisance, and so is craning backwards to peer out the car's rear window. So instead, if you keep binoculars in the car (and don't we all), maneuver your side mirror to focus the passed bird in it, and from the comfort of your front seat look at the mirror image through your binoculars (it will be just like looking at the bird from the distance outside the car, not like looking at an object 2 feet away).

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Will Cook's homepage is an excellent general source of birding and nature-related links/resources (and also the place to learn about 'Carolinabirds' internet listserv group):

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

**Parting Words...**

"Nature recycles everything."

~ *David Brower*



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