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The BULLETIN...
Chapel Hill Bird Club
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<http://chbc.carolinanature.com>

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>> **Meeting :Monday, Feb. 25** <<

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

Change of Speaker:
Susan Campbell will speak on
Gardening for Hummingbirds

John Gerwin will Speak in March on:
the Swainson's Warbler.

This warbler is a species of management concern in the Southeast. Much has been learned about its breeding biology over the past 15 years. John will discuss 2 projects he oversees, including data from 12 years of banding. John will have just returned from Haiti, so he'll also briefly share the latest status report for the **Black-capped Petrel**, the topic with which he's been involved.

Saturday Morning Field Trips

Local field trips are usually lead by Doug Shadwick, and depart from Glen Lennox Shopping Center Parking lot off HWY 54 promptly at 7:30 most Saturday mornings. All skills are welcome. Trips are usually over by noon. Dress for the weather and for walking. For further details, call Doug at 942-0479. It is always useful to check with Doug the night before, just in case the field trip is not a local one, and leaves from another location.

To :

No. 2

Report of Saturday, Jan 12 field trip.

(This account of the Jan. 12 field trip was sent to CarolinaBirds by Rob Rybczynski.)

“Four of us joined Doug Shadwick for this morning's Chapel Hill Bird Club outing. We visited the Vista Point, Seaforth and Ebenezer Point areas along Jordan Lake (NC). Ducks were in very low numbers but the area to the west of Seaforth provided a grebe bonanza, number-wise. At least 170 (!) Horned Grebes and 42 Pied-billed Grebes were present along the opposite shore. A lot of scanning failed to find any Eared Grebes. We also had 6 Bald Eagles in the air at once here.

On the way home to Cary, I stopped at Lake Crabtree county park, around noon, and walked out to the fishing pier. I found easily the recently reported Red-necked Grebe straight out from the pier, about half way across the lake. The bird's distinct shape made it readily identifiable with binoculars but a scope was needed for satisfying views. Other waterfowl on the lake included Ruddy Ducks, Ring-necked Ducks and scattered Pied-billed Grebes .

Good birding!

Bob Rybczynski, Cary NC”

Birds and Airplanes - Did You Know?

“The first plane brought down was a Wright biplane that crashed in 1912 on the shoreline near Long Beach, California, after sea gulls became entangled in the wires that braced its wings.”

“The Birder’s Handbook”, by Ehrlich, Dobkin, & Wheye,

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Report of Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend Field Trip- Jan 19-21

By Karen Piplani

Rainy weather and uncertain forecasts decreased the participants to Doug Shadwick, Alan Johnston, Denny Dobbin, and Max Lunberg, an exchange student in botany/ornithology from Sweden . Saturday the 19th, the group went on a Pelagic trip from Hatteras led by Brian Patteson. A Northern Fulmar, California Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake were among the birds sighted, along with many Razorbills. Full details of the trip may be seen on the website www.patteson.com.

Sunday, the group birded from Hatteras to Pea Island, to Nag's Head . A Eurasian Wigeon was among the birds spotted. Monday included stops at Lake Phelps in Pettigrew State Park where a Common Merganser was among the birds seen. Pungo Lake, in the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, provided hundreds of Blackbirds, and masses of Tundra Swans.

Report of Field Trip of January 26

By Karen Piplani

Dairyland Road was the target area for this field trip. Doug Shadwick, Alan Johnston, Max Lunberg, Peter Perlman, Bob Rydczyinski, and I formed the group that day. Before the group left the parking lot, a Red-shouldered Hawk was spotted with a recent catch. A Raven was spotted as the group drove to the pond area near Maple Grove Farm. A cooperative White Crowned Sparrow sat up on one tree limb there for good viewing.

A Marlin provided a fine show near Anilorac Farm. It was spotted in a far tree, and was still enough for good looks through a scope, and then flew, at a high rate of speed right over the group, to perch in a nearby tree, for another good look. At that stop, we also saw a Red Shouldered Hawk, a Kestrel, and a Red-tailed Hawk, for an exceptionally nice group of raptors. In addition to Savannah Sparrows along the road, at another stop, White-Throated and White-Crowned Sparrows, and a flock of Pipits were seen. A crowd of female Cowbirds, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker ended the outing.

Minnesota bogs, Dakota grasslands Steve Shultz's Nov. 26th program

by Ginger Travis

I sometimes think Steve Shultz missed his calling in life. Combine his restless energy with his apparent delight in logistics and you can easily imagine him planning multinational military operations or running nationwide political campaigns. Of course, he could always just stick to birds and apply his gifts to a national Big Year. My impressions of Steve were reinforced by his November 26 CHBC program on birding the Dakota grasslands and Minnesota's Sax-Zim bog – a whirlwind 5-day trip that started after work on Friday, May 26, 2006 (RDU to Minneapolis to Duluth in an evening) and ended back at home on Wednesday, May 31. Once in possession of their rental cars, Steve, his wife Tracy, and three birding pals covered 1,892 miles and saw 160 species.

As usual for Steve, the trip was sharply focused on a few target birds – including Connecticut Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in the bog and

Sprague's Pipit and Baird's Sparrow in the Dakota grasslands. (North Dakota itself was a target too – the 50th state Steve's visited.) The time window for this trip was narrow – the period after the neotropical migrants got back to northern Minnesota and were singing, and while Baird's Sparrows were doing flight displays on their breeding grounds – a window of just a couple or three weeks. The five trip participants birded nonstop from daybreak to dark and grabbed their meals from the snack racks at gas stations along the way. (Never missed cocktail hour, however.) To improve their chances during a short stop at Sax-Zim they hired a local guide. Otherwise they were self-guided after planning the trip with "Birding North Dakota" (North Dakota Game and Fish Department) and Kim Eckert's "A Birder's Guide to Minnesota." And, yes, despite the gonzo birding they did smell a rose or two along the way – notably stopping to see the thrilling sight of the Mississippi River as it originates from Lake Itasca in Minnesota. I've seen it too – basically a narrow clear creek tumbling over some rocks – and a lot of the people visiting this landmark act as if they were

at the shrine at Lourdes. (I saw a family push their daughter in her wheelchair into the inches-deep stream, to the delight of all.) It really IS a thrill to stand in the headwaters of one of the world's great rivers – whether birds are flying by or not. (And Steve and company bagged a Golden-winged Warbler nearby.)

Steve's CHBC program followed his itinerary – we saw Minnesota and North Dakota in the order he did, and there were plenty of shots of his party members birding or getting themselves into and out of jams – like the North Dakota road that got smaller and smaller and finally disappeared under the waters of a seasonal lake. Oops! A 37-point turn got their rental car turned around on a shoulderless, one-lane dirt road. This was not a slide show of magazine-worthy, every-feather-in-minute-focus photos of birds. Instead, what Steve did with his pictures was put us in the action and make us want to take the same trip (but maybe with better food). He described the planning and logistics and execution – emphasis on the birders as well as the birds – which represented a slightly different approach from many of our CHBC programs. (“Execution” included a mini-disco-ball hanging from the rear-view mirror and a “Connecticut Warbler or bust” sign in the rental car's rear window.)

Trip highlights included the “stupendous” sewage lagoons at Minot, North Dakota, with their thousands of waterfowl (Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes); Lostwood NWR where, in addition to Baird's Sparrow and Sprague's Pipit, there were Piping Plovers breeding in those little wire-mesh boxes that protect the eggs and chicks from predators; and the Theodore Roosevelt National Park with its very beautiful, austere badlands – an eastern outpost for western or mid-continental species like Mountain Bluebird, Lark Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, and Prairie Falcon. From a boreal bog to a badland in 5 days? Wow! All of this is described in much greater detail in Steve's 26 pages of personal notes, which he might willingly share with anyone raring to go. Just ask. I did!

January 28 Meeting: Dick Thomas's Peruvian Ecotour / Piedmont Environmental Educational Center

By Karen Piplani

Dick Thomas, director of the Piedmont Environmental Education Center, spoke on Peruvian Jungle Ecology in the January meeting of the Chapel Hill Bird Club. He has made several trips to the Tamipoda Tropical Research Station, upriver on the Inambari from Puerto Moldonado, Peru. This is in the southern part of the country, over the mountains from the coast, in the Amazon basin.

This area is less widely visited than other places, but here there is a deliberate attempt to limit damage from excessive tourism, and the travel and accommodations are arranged to be in keeping with this goal. For instance, the rooms have no air condition, and sleeping with open windows and sleeping nets over the beds allows one to fall asleep to the sounds of the forest.

This area is lush with countless kinds of vegetation, and fauna. But surprisingly, the soil in the jungle is very fragile, and the occupants of the ecosystem have to fight constantly to survive. Many animals and birds have evolved along with specific plants, in such a way as to help support each others' growth.

For instance, leaves may fall off trees, but when they hit the ground, they do not decay to replenish the tree, but are usually immediately eaten by insects or animals. Some trees, like the Garlic tree, have evolved an interesting system for supplementing their nutrition. As the tree grows, the heartwood decays, leaving an empty central area surrounded by the living outer layer of the tree. There are usually openings in the trunk of older trees, so that the central area may be entered. This open area is accessible to animals like bats, to use as a protected roosting or nesting area. These animals leave their excrement, and the tree is able to use substances in the excrement for nourishment.

Indians in these areas practice “Slash and Burn” farming, by which they select an area for planting, fell the trees and vegetation, and burn it. This provides the soil with a little nourishment for the
