

birding the triangle... and beyond, for over half a century

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The BULLETIN...
Chapel Hill Bird Club
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No. 5

>>Last Meeting until Fall <<
Monday, May 19

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.

>>Birding Antarctica <<
by
Judy and David Smith

Chapel Hill Bird Club members Judy and David
Smith will share their experiences and pictures from
their once-in-a-lifetime trip earlier this year to
Antarctica.

Last reminder about Dues

If the mailing label on your Bulletin has "08" after
your name, that means that your membership dues
are overdue. We will be unable to continue mailing
Bulletins to folks whose dues have not been paid

To continue membership:

Dues: \$15/yr. individuals/family, \$10/year students
Please send checks payable to Chapel Hill Bird
Club to: **Patsy Bailey, 277 Mint Springs Rd.**
Pittsboro, NC 27312

To: _____

Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

Ph _____

E-mail _____

New Member _____ or Renewal _____

Slate of Officers for 2008-2009

We will be having the election of officers at the
coming meeting.

President- Amalie Tuffin has offered to serve
for a year! (**Ruth Roberson** will step down at the
end of May)

Vice Presidents: Ginger Travis will
continue, and **Dave Gulick**, has offered to step in
to take the place of retiring **Karen Bearden**.

Secretary: Amalie Tuffin has offered to
continue next year.

Treasurer: Patsy Bailey has offered to
continue next year.

Election of Officers for 2008-2009 (continued)

Web Site Manager: Will Cook has offered to continue

Bulletin Editor: Karen Piplani has offered to continue

Refreshments: A Sign-Up Sheet will be passed around for volunteers to provide refreshments for each meeting.

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Summary of **Meeting of April 28**

Part 1:

Norm Budnitz on Christmas and Spring Bird Counts at Jordan Lake

Norm Budnitz has lived in this area for some time. He got his Masters from Duke in 1980. He taught at the Carolina Friends School for 20 years and is currently involved in the Center for Inquiry-Based Learning at Duke.

Norm Budnitz has been doing Jordan Lake Christmas and Spring Bird Counts for many years and has accumulated 30 years of birding data. Barbara Roth of the New Hope Audubon Society started the work earlier, and Norm has continued since 1977.

Many of us forget that Jordan Lake is a relatively recent creation. Land clearing for the Lake started in the late 70's. Filling of the lake was not complete until '82. The lake fulfills a variety of recreational needs, such as sailing and fishing, in addition to its function as a water source.

Because there were many graphs to be presented, Norm noted that he would periodically show a picture of one of 10 mystery birds for us to identify, just to keep us on our toes. The quiz was to be graded at the end of the presentation.

There have been some changes in the bird populations through the years and in the ways birds are counted. The number of observers and the hours they put in, and the number of observing parties and their hours have been tracked. The number of "party hours" has been rising, and now seems to be leveling off to a number equal with individual observer hours.

Who's Hot? (increasing):

Ring-billed Gulls- many in spring, but lots at Christmas, so many that they dominate the data.

Canada Geese- more at Christmas than the spring.

Double Crested Cormorants- more at Christmas than spring count

Great Blue Herons – numbers are generally increasing, but there was a dip in 2004

Ospreys- ↑ in spring, none in winter

Immature Bald Eagles- ~ 15 at Christmas

Remember that Bald Eagles take 5-6 years to mature. Their age may be estimated by noting their coloring:

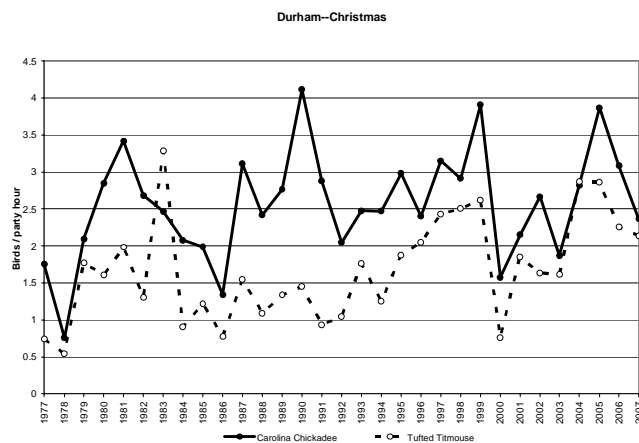
All White head and tail-adult

Yellow in the bill, some white on the head, mottled body, some white in tail- ~2nd to 3rd year

Mostly dark, dark bill- ~1st year

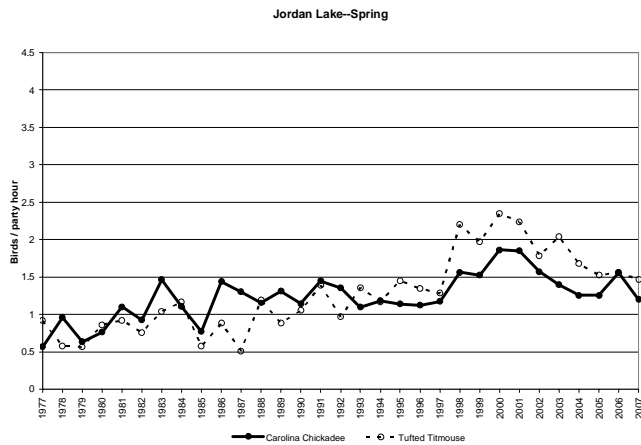
Woodpeckers – all woodpeckers have increased per party hour of observation. Since Hurricane Fran in 1997, there was a substantial increase in sightings for about 2-3 years.

Chickadees and Titmice – There has been a larger increase in chickadees than titmice at the Christmas Counts. In birds per party hour of observation in the spring, there were more chickadees than titmice, until 1993. Then there were more Titmice than Chickadees in many areas. The same thing happened in Durham, but that graph does not indicate that Titmice took over the top position. What happened in 1993? Perhaps there were changes in land use that favored Titmice? Perhaps subtle changes caused by global warming changed the time when the species started to breed? This may be an interesting topic for future work.



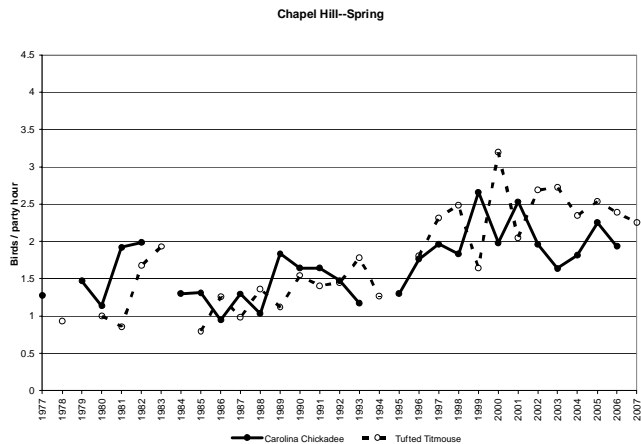
Graph by Norman Budnitz –Durham Christmas Count

Number of birds, Chickadees and Titmice, per party hour, on the Durham Christmas Count from 1977 to 2007.



Graph by Norm Budnitz

This graph shows “Birds per Party-hour” in the Jordan Lake Spring count from 1977 to 2007, and shows the graphs for Titmice and Chickadees.



Graph by Norm Budnitz

This graph shows “Birds per Party-hour” in the Chapel Hill Spring count from 1977 to 2007, and shows the graphs for Titmice and Chickadees

Although the graph has breaks in data, it shows the same pattern as the Jordan Lake graph.

Hooded Mergansers – are increasing
Ring Neck Ducks – are increasing
Purple Finches – are increasing

Who’s Not Hot? (Decreasing species)

Bobwhites –
Kestrels –
Loggerhead Shrikes
Field Sparrows
Mourning Doves
Cliff Swallows
Barn Swallows- ↓numbers of barns

Most the above decreases are probably because of land use changes. These species require open fields.

American Crows – have been decreasing since 2001. Is this related to the West Nile virus?

Blue Jays

One Time Wonders:

Western Grey Flycatcher

Short Eared Owl

Wilson’s Storm-Petrel

These accidental species provided a treat for many people.

Norm revealed the answers to his bird identity quiz, and most of us did reasonably well. He did have a tricky fuzzy photo of a bird in motion; that one turned out to be a Yellow-rumped Warbler. (Remember that the breeding Yellow-rumped warbler has yellow in his crown.)

Part 2:

Ginger Travis

on

Birding Jordan Lake by Canoe and Kayak

Ginger has been canoeing and kayaking for several years and finds that it is an ideal way to bird. One can get very close to the birds and she almost always finds interesting species. She has done her Jordan Lake counts by canoe or Kayak since 1999.

Ginger took Norm Budnitz with her for birding session on April 16, and had beautiful slides of their trip. The hardest part of paddling used to be transporting the boat. The paddling was a snap. Now there are lots of lighter weight kayaks and canoes are coming out, and these are much easier to carry and transport. Their starting point was the Farrington Point boat ramp. They used an Old Town canoe, 14 feet long, which provides lots of stability. It is of moderate weight. The Farrington Point Boat ramp provides the closest launch site to the north end of the Lake, is fairly clean, free, and is open 24 hours.

Norm and Ginger planned to paddle from the Point, NNE across the lake, up the Brush Creek arm to the small bay area at the entrance of the

creek. The distance traveled would be about 4 miles.

It was a beautiful day, about 70 degrees, with a light breeze as they headed out. They saw lots of Bonaparte's Gulls and one immature Bald Eagle as they left the ramp. Some cleared land is seen along the shoreline. This open habitat is good for Indigo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks.

The way to bird by boat is to poke along the shoreline, using the boat to slowly get closer to birds. As they progressed, they were paddling over flooded trees. The full mark, or "full pool", for Jordan Lake is 216'. This day it was 219', 3' over the full mark.

They passed Double-crested Cormorants on logs, and kept hearing Red-winged Blackbirds. They spotted a Northern Water Snake basking, and were able to get great close-up photos.

They had traveled 2 miles by the time they turned left toward Brush Creek. Along Jordan Lake, pine trees tend to grow on old fields. Hardwoods grow on steep places and along little creeks. These tend to provide better birding than pines.

The north and east sides of Jordan Lake are very shallow and are full of willows. These willow flats provide magnificent bird habitat and provide homes for Eastern Kingbirds, Orchard Orioles, Yellow Warblers, Green Herons, and Yellow-billed Cuckoos.

As they moved up the creek, they approached an old beaver dam overhung by branches. Norm pulling them over by tugging on the branches, until they slipped into the placid pond behind the beaver dam. Here they saw Prothonotary Warblers, Tree Swallows, and Starlings.

From this area they could see 13 Heron nests. These are part of the nests one may see from Big Woods Road. From where they were, to Big Woods Road, the distance is ½ mile. This area is full of Great Blue Herons, Wood Ducks, Woodpeckers and Kingfishers. They did not see Heron babies at this time, but did see many adults, some incubating. An Osprey flew over, provoking a dispute with the Herons about the air space.

As they left the area, they could see some dry land, and trees growing on the dam. Many old dams support trees and they may help to anchor the dams.

When Norm and Ginger returned to the Farrington Point Boat ramp, they had covered over 4 miles. Ginger noted that an immature Black-crowned Night Heron was on the Chapel Hill Bird count last year. Yellow-throated Warblers are very common in mature pines at Jordan Lake, and Prothonotary Warblers are very common along the Jordan Lake Shorelines, wherever there are dead trees. There are lots of Red-shouldered Hawks to be seen and heard at Jordan Lake, because they have lots of good habitat here. American Redstarts may be seen when they migrate through. There are lots of Great-crested Flycatchers; their "Weep!" call is frequently heard. Great Egrets may be seen in July and August as they wander after breeding. They are often seen at the north end of the lake.

Ginger strongly believes that if everyone had a boat, the world would be a much happier place. She is glad to offer advice based on her experiences.

By Karen Piplani

Personal Follow-up

On May 1st, Ginger took me out on Jordan Lake in an inflatable Innova kayak she had purchased for a vacation trip to Virgin Gorda, British West Indies. She brought her regular kayak along to use herself. The inflatable kayak had a small metal keel that was fitted underneath to give it more steer ability. The floor, seat back and sides of the kayak were separate sections and were inflated with a foot pump. The foot rest had not yet been installed. We put in at a small fishing ramp at the southern end of the lake, in order to use the Weaver Creek area, where no gas powered boats are allowed.

I plumped myself down in the kayak, but found that I was not quite close enough to the backrest to sit upright in a supported manner. The sides of the kayak fit snugly and comfortably. I used a regular kayak two-ended paddle, and was very soon able to move myself around easily.

The moderate breeze, my inexperience, and the nature of the craft caused us to take longer than usual to cross to the other side, into some willow shrubs. On the way we saw a Spotted Sandpiper. After reaching the brushy area, we heard Red-eyed Vireos, Great Crested Flycatchers and a Kingbird. We saw an Osprey cruise over. We had a great time, and I'm hooked. By Karen Piplani