

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

c/o K. Piplani, 1502 Halifax Rd.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
k_piplani@alumni.unc.edu

The BULLETIN...

To :
Chapel Hill Bird Club
January 2009

<http://chbc.carolinanature.com>

Vol. 37

> **Meeting :Monday, Jan. 26, 2009** <

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.

Who/What: **Doug Pratt** will be speaking on
“From Triumph to Tragedy in
Kauai’s Lost World”

Doug Pratt is an ornithologist for the North Carolina
Museum of Natural Sciences. His research primarily
focuses on systematics and biogeography of island
birds of the Pacific. He'll offer a 50-year perspective
on the island, where 5 bird species that still existed in
1960 have since become extinct. Doug has authored
and illustrated numerous books, journals and field
guides including, *A Field Guide to the Birds of
Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific* and a Pocket Guide
to Hawaii's Birds, *Hawaii: The Traveler's Wildlife
Guide*. Bring yourselves and your curiosity for a
fascinating evening.

+++++

Dues Alert!

The year of renewal for your Chapel Hill Bird Club
membership is listed on the top right of the mailing
label on your CHBC Bulletin. If the year is marked
with **yellow**, this indicates that your membership is
due now. Please bring your dues (checks payable to

To :

No. 1

the Chapel Hill Bird Club) to the next meeting, with
the completed membership form, or mail them to:

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

Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

ph _____

E-mail _____

New member: _____ or, RENEWAL: _____

dues: \$15/yr. individuals/family, \$10/year students
Make checks payable to Chapel Hill Bird Club.

Saturday Morning Field Trips

Local field trips, resuming after the Christmas Bird
Counts, are usually led 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, or see the CHBC website at:

<http://chbc.carolinanature.com/>

Just in time for winter birding:

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel By **Steven Schultz**

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) was considered one of the “Engineering Wonders of the World” when, in 1964, the 17.6 mile bridge-tunnel complex spanned the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, connecting urban Virginia Beach with the rural Eastern Shore of Virginia. In addition to cutting hours off the drive between the Tidewater region of Virginia and the Delmarva, the CBBT quickly became known as a premier birding location for viewing sea ducks and gulls, as well as occasionally producing interesting passerine migrants.

The reason that the CBBT is so attractive to birds is the existence of four manmade islands built to house the terminal ends of the two tunnels. These islands, each just over five acres in size, provide foraging and roosting areas for a variety of birds, but especially sea ducks and gulls. Traditionally the islands have been referred to by number (one through four) with “one” being the southernmost “four” the northernmost. Owing to the lack of predators on the islands, and their positions in the bay, the islands act as magnets for birds that may otherwise be spread over a larger area. In addition to regularly occurring species, the islands are known for regularly attracting otherwise rare or uncommon species such as Harlequin Duck, Common Eider, White-winged Scoter and Red-necked Grebe. Among the thousands of gulls that use the complex for roosting and loafing each winter, rarities such as Iceland Gull and Glaucous Gull may occasionally be found, and sometimes super-rarities such as Black-tailed Gull are spotted. Even when the rarities are scarce, more common but sometimes difficult to observe species like Brant, Purple Sandpiper and Great Cormorant can often be found with relative ease.

Sound like a great place to visit? It can be, but there are some important considerations. The CBBT used to actively advertise to birders in magazines and online, and access to parts of the complex not normally granted to the general traveling public were afforded to birders at no additional cost over the bridge toll. In the wake of recent world events related to terrorism, access to much of the complex that was once available to

birders has been significantly curtailed. Island #1 (unfortunately often the least birdy of the four) is open to all visitors with no additional requirements. This is the island with the restaurant and fishing pier and is the closest one to shore, being just a few miles from busy Virginia Beach. Access to islands #2, #3, and #4 is now restricted. Unfortunately for birders, islands #3 and #4 are often the most attractive to sea ducks and gulls, and it is here that folks previously spent most of their time during visits to the complex. Currently, in order to visit islands #2, #3, and #4, (which now have high fences to block casual access) birders must pay a fee for police escort, and the fee can be a bit steep for individual birders. Accordingly, most visits to the CBBT other than to island “one” are during group outings where the \$50/hour security officer fee can be divided among a number of participants (the maximum allowable size for each group is 15). The Virginia Society of Ornithology frequently offers at least one winter trip to the CBBT, and local birding groups may advertise trips as well. Individual participants are required to submit identification information in advance to allow for vetting prior to arrival.

Even with the current restrictions, a visit to the CBBT can be rewarding. A stop at island #1 may produce a nice assortment of sea ducks, although the number of gulls that use this island is low relative to the others. The advantages to visiting island #1 include the lack of additional fee, presence of restrooms and food service, and the ability to linger for as long as one wishes. Visiting the CBBT as part of a group affords the ability to bird islands #2-4 with the possibility of finding some very “nice” birds.

While winter is the primary season during which birders visit the CBBT, spring and especially fall migration can result in unusual finds as passerine migrants stop on islands #3 and #4 to break up the crossing of Chesapeake Bay (islands #1 and #2 are close enough to the shore that most birds likely pass over them). The number and 'quality' of birds is quite variable at this time of year ranging from nothing to a few dozen birds. Islands #3 and 4 have almost no vegetation, so they are not particularly attractive to passerines like warblers, thrushes, etc. but some birds will stop for a short time. These islands can be better late in fall migration for

sparrows as the vegetation that is present is most similar to sparrow habitat. Of course the CBBT really shines in winter with the islands attracting a variety of sea ducks, grebes, and especially gulls.

For more information on the CBBT, visit www.cbbt.com. Information on the Virginia Society of Ornithology and their annual "Virginia Beach Weekends" that offer trips to the CBBT can be found at www.virginiabirds.net.

A summary of the talk on Alaska for the Nov 2008 meeting will appear in next month's Bulletin.

+++++

2008 Chapel Hill Spring Bird Count - Compiler's Comments

by Will Cook

The Chapel Hill spring count on May 3 was quite breezy, which kept numbers down and resulted in an average count. The overall numbers were nearly identical to last year's, with 127 species and 9924 individual birds (last year also 127 species; 10-year average 124 species, 11276 birds). Party-hours and birds per party-hour were both a little below average, nearly identical to last year's numbers.

Remarkably, three species were new to the count this year: a Common Raven west of Chapel Hill, near the same spot as the ones on the Christmas count, being chased by an American Crow (Jane Brinkley), a heard-only King Rail at Jordan Lake (Lois Schultz), and a pair of feral Mute Swans (the same as on the Christmas count). The Common Raven was being harassed by an American Crow, for a nice comparison. The raven was overdue; they've been seen in the vicinity regularly over the past few years. King Rail isn't too unexpected; they did breed once at Mason Farm, just a few miles away. Hopefully the Mute Swans on this count are truly feral instead of purchased; feral Mute Swans populations in neighboring Raleigh seem to be established and increasing. Other rarities include Pied-billed Grebe (Bob Chase), Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at the sewerline heronry near Mike and Lois Schultz's house, Chuck-will's-widow

(Norm Budnitz), Red-breasted Nuthatch (Shelley Theye, at her feeder), and Pine Siskin (Cynthia Fox, at her feeder). The nesting Hooded Mergansers at Jordan Lake only made an appearance for count week this year.

We normally set quite a few record highs, but this year there was just one: the 7 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons (2 in 1991). The 10-20 mph winds during the count kept numbers for most species down. We had no big misses and set no record lows, but several were at their lowest in many years: Wood Duck (lowest since 1990), Spotted Sandpiper (1990), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1984, just one!), Northern Flicker (1974), Barn Swallow (1973), European Starling (1974), American Redstart (1972), Common Grackle (1974), and House Sparrow (1973).

This year Pam Timmons and Perry Haaland claimed the honor of finding the most species, with 80. They covered the Dairyland Road area west of Chapel Hill. Bob Chase, covering southwestern Durham, came close, with 78, and counted the highest number of individual birds, 833.

Weather in brief: low 60 F, high 80 F; wind SW 10-20 mph; mostly cloudy; no rain.

Thanks to all of our 54 field counters and 14 feeder watchers!

Chapel Hill Bird Club Officers

President: Amalie Tuffin,
amaliet@post.harvard.edu

Vice President: Ginger Travis, (919) 942-7746
ginger_travis@bellsouth.net

Vice President: Dave Gulick
d2gulick@earthlink.net

Secretary: Amalie Tuffin,
amaliet@post.harvard.edu

Treasurer: Patsy Bailey, (919) 933-5850

Field Trip Coordinator: Doug Shadwick,
(919)942-0479 dougshadwick@nc.rr.com

WebMaster: Will Cook cwcook@duke.edu

Bulletin Editor: Karen Piplani, (919) 929-6553, k_piplani@alumni.unc.edu

2008 TRIANGLE AREA SPRING BIRD COUNT TOTALS

4/27 4/29 5/10 5/4 5/3

— Chapel Hill Observer Party Number —

Species	Dur	FL	WC	JL	CH	overlap	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
Lincoln's	1																												
Swamp	6	3			6						1					4						1							
White-throated	127	36	8	9	32		5		3	1	1					11	2		1			3	1			1	2	1	
White-crowned			2																										
CARDINAL, Northern	328	202	192	317	666		35	4	90	18	29	52	30	75		35	31	12	20	15	7	6	23	7	34	30	78	35	
GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted		4	2	3	12			2		2									1		2	3	1					1	
Blue	34	11	23	54	37		6		4	2		2		3		5	1	3	2	2						6			
BUNTING, Indigo	149	23	44	169	162		13		5	8	9	17	2	12		22	4	4	16	7	1	18	7	1	14	1		1	
BOBOLINK			51	18	2															1							1		
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	68	11	28	49	86		12			1	3	2		10		5	1	2	2	20				5	13	3	5	2	
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	26	1	14	14	12		10																				2		
GRACKLE, Common	184	79	110	220	243		21		12	1	20	9		10		31	12	1	10	9			1	11	21	26	4	44	
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	121	62	40	112	165		9		14	9	5	9	3	19		5	5		9	17	2	4	11	8	17	5	3	11	
ORIOLE, Orchard	18	2	13	34	14		4				1									1		3		4				1	
Baltimore	2		1	1	6															2			1			2		1	
FINCH, House	38	47	79	37	254		18		29		5	17	3	19		15	12	5	2	10				5			6	43	65
SISKIN, Pine					9			9																					
GOLDFINCH, American	159	162	81	262	445		37	12	48	8	7	23	5	36		12	14	12	16	54	4	8	14	17	18	23	32	45	
SPARROW, House	44	1	16	29	37		1		5		4	5		6		1	1										10	4	
TOTAL SPECIES	159	129	115	121	121	127	80	29	69	63	60	64	40	78	14	77	58	52	71	58	44	69	57	56	58	48	37	67	
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	6710	5209	3252	7891	9924	28	659	89	829	428	373	648	209	833	48	609	386	310	683	529	165	370	311	390	650	381	452	600	
Number of Groups					22		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Number of Participants	16	17	29	47	54		2	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	6	4	1	3	1	1	3	1	3	1	1	10	6	
Start					500		615		645	500	700	615	730	500	800	645	645	600	515	700	630	530	600	740	515	615	730	630	
End					1945		715		1555	1130	1300	1415	1030	1730	1800	1945	1545	1200	1315	1100	1200	1330	1130	1530	1400	1700	1100	1400	
Party Hours: Total	78.25	70.75	53	140.5	147.3		11	1	9	6.5	6.5	6	3	11	1	8.5	9	4.5	###	4	2	7.5	5.5	7.8	8	6.25	7.5	11.5	
Party Hours: On Foot	64.25	59.25	47	104	121.5		9.5	1	7.5	6	5	3	3	10		8	7	4	8.25	4	2	7	5		6.5	5.75	7.5	11.5	
Party Hours: By Car	14	11.5	6	24.5	16.5		1.5		1.5	0.5	1.5	3		1		0.5	2		2			0.5	0.5			1.5	0.5		
Party Hours: By Bicycle				1.5											1			0.5											
Party Hours: By Boat				12	7.8																			7.8					
Party Miles: Total	98.1	162.3	91	312	228		14	0.5	10	10	26	17	2	12.5	5	10	28.1	7	29	1.5	0.2	12	5	8	9.7	12.5	3	5	
Party Miles: On Foot	51.1	52.4	37	77.6	88		4	0.5	4	3	6	2	2	11.5		5	3.5	5	8	1.5	0.2	9	3.5		1.5	9.8	3	5	
Party Miles: By Car	47	109.9	54	224.9	125		10		6	7	20	15		1		5	24.6		21			3	1.5		8.2	2.7			
Party Miles: By Bicycle				7											5			2											
Party Miles: By Boat				9.5	8																			8					
Owling Hours	2	2.3	2	3.8	4					0.5				1					1.25			0.5			0.5		0.25		
Owling Miles	0	0.75	0	24	10.6					0				1					9			0.5			0		0.1		
Feeder Hours			5		25			1						1													15	8	

CH = Chapel Hill count 5/3/08; weather: low 60, high 80; wind SW 10-20 mph; mostly cloudy

WC = Wake County count 5/10/08; weather: 60-85, partly cloudy

Dur = Durham count 4/27/08

JL = Jordan Lake count 5/4/08; weather: 59-82, wind 5 mph, partly cloudy

FL = Falls Lake count 4/29/08; weather: 48-64, sunny

Party Areas

Party Members

Party Areas

Party Members

- 1 1,2,4,7 Pam Timmons, Perry Haaland
- 2 4-yard Cynthia Fox
- 3 8,13 Tom & Barbara Driscoll, Bo Howes
- 4 9,10 Norm Budnitz
- 5 11,12 Kent Fiala
- 6 14,17 Betty King, Judy Teague
- 7 14,15 (part) Mike Schultz
- 8 15,18 Bob Chase
- 9 16 Alan Kneidel
- 10 20, 13 Will Cook, Nicki Cagle, Derb Carter, Kyle Dexter, 22 32 Ted Gilliland, Jenny Palmer, Chad Schoen
- 11 21 Ken Lundstrom, Harriet Sato, Karen Piplani, June Beyman
- 12 21 (part) Loren Hintz
- 13 22S Anson R. Cooke, Anson D. Cooke, Phil Warren
- 14 23, 25 Amalie Tuffin
- 15 23-yard Shelley Theye

- 16 24N-south Doug Shadwick, Bob Rybczynski, Max Lundberg
- 17 24N-north Judy Murray
- 18 24-canoee Ginger Travis, Lois Schultz
- 19 24S Alan Johnston
- 20 26 Jane Brinkley
- 21 31 Audrey Booth, Janet Campbell, Roger Gorham, Marcia Hellerman, Bert & Mary Lou Liverance, Dick & Ann Wood, Sue Fletcher, Sue Greenberg
- Feeders: Jay Rabb, Susan Fraser, Wallace Clyde, Moore & Mabel Parker, Connie Sheffy, Nancy Gorham
- Maurice Graves, Steven Graves, David Murdock, Kim Aycrigg, Sam Baron, Lynn Ogden; Feeders: Victor & Doris Bowles, Lew Miles, Harry & Caroline Pederson, Jerrold & Joan Walecka