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Doug Pratt

Chapel Hill Bird Club Bulletin

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Next Meeting: Monday,

27 October

When/where: 7:15 pm refreshments;

7.30 pm meeting. The lounge, Olin T Binkley Baptist Church, corner of Highway 15-501 Bypass and Willow Drive, behind University Mall, Chapel Hill.

Tom Driscoll: Birding Uganda

Tom's trip to Uganda was a naturalist's dream. He began his 3 weeks in Uganda by seeing the enigmatic Shoebill and ended his journey with the Mountain Gorillas! In between, he saw over 420 species of birds, 40 species of mammals (including several lions and 10 species of monkeys), and a Spitting Cobra. Join us as Tom shares his stories and photos of Uganda's amazing birds.

Tom Driscoll is the current president of the New Hope Audubon Society, which serves Durham, Chatham, and Orange counties. When he is not traveling the globe in search of birds and animals,

Tom enjoys leading local bird walks and strives to ensure that participants find the birds they want to see.

Saturday Field Trips

Rob Rybczynski leads field trips for the Chapel Hill Bird Club. The trips from Glen Lennox Shopping Center on Highway 54 in Chapel Hill at 7.30 Saturday mornings except for the summer hiatus. All skill levels are welcome. Trips usually end by noon. If the trip is not local and/or leaves from another location, the change will be posted to CarolinaBirds (readable also at birding.aba.org/maillist/NzC) and at the Chapel Hill Bird Facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/chapelhillbirdclub/. For yearly schedules see <http://chbc.carolinanature.com/fieldtrips.html>. Need more details? Call Rob at 919 460

Kiptopeke Field Trip

Eddie Owens

Members of the Chapel Hill Bird Club, along with family and friends, ventured to Kiptopeke State Park near the

southern tip of the eastern shore of Virginia for the weekend of October 4-5. Mike Tove, a member of the NC Bird Records Committee and unabashed hawk enthusiast, led our group of 8 to the annual fall hawk watch. The hawk watch location is on top of a large platform where official counters are joined by enthusiasts from all over the region. Several groups of birders and individuals joined the growing crowd of hawk watchers. In addition to their binoculars, they brought their lawn chairs and lunches and settled in for a day of hawk watching. And what fun the day would turn out to be!

Our small group stayed at a hotel on the mainland not far from the entrance to the 18-mile long Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, an engineering feat worth the visit. Great Black-backed Gulls perched atop the light poles that lined the bridge. Kiptopeke State Park is 3 miles north of the tunnel's terminus.

It had rained overnight but the drizzle was dissipating and the clouds were beginning to break as we drove toward our destination. As the day waned, sunny skies prevailed. Strong winds blew out of the Southwest, West, and then Northwest - a great sign for a good flight day. By day's end, the final tallies confirmed what we all knew - this would be a day for the records!

A total of 1192 raptors was recorded - a number in the top 5 of all the hawk watches in the country. Mike Tove, our leader, commented that in "41 years of hawk-watching, I've never seen a migration quite like that." Kiptopeke Hawk Watch had twice as many Merlins and more Peregrines than all other major hawk watches combined. The official Merlin count was 457 (5 short of the Kiptopeke record), and the number of Peregrines totaled 251. It was a day for the falcons.



Merlin (photo by Mike Tove)

They came fast, occasionally three or four at a time, often flying low over the tree tops, riding the wind like maniacal surfers. We soon got the hang of identifying Merlins, American Kestrels, and Peregrine Falcons. A good number of Sharp-shinned Hawks (112) and Cooper's Hawks (30) gave us practice identifying accipiters. We saw plenty of Ospreys, a fair number of Bald Eagles, and nearly a dozen Northern Harriers.

Kiptopeke Hawk Watch was established in 1977 and has recorded nearly 750,000 hawks and vultures comprising 19 species. It is the best place in the world to see Merlins and Peregrines. You can view up-to-date data for the hawk watch at <http://www.hawkcount.org> (click the Kiptopeke link).

On day 2 (Sunday), we arrived for another day of hawk watching, but calm conditions and blue skies yielded little in comparison with the previous day's spoils. Restless, some of us wandered off to explore the birdy nature trails of Kiptopeke, a nice fallback when the hawk watching is slow.

The trails I took meandered through forests, fields, hedgerows, and the edge of the bay. The diversity of habitat yielded a nice assortment of bird species. The Raptor Trail and the



Peregrine Falcon (photo by Mike Tove)

Songbird Trail produced 8 species of warblers including Black-throated Blue and Green Warblers, Northern Parulas, American Redstarts, Ovenbird, and a Magnolia Warbler. A pair of Blue-headed Vireos offered nice looks, too. Then I stumbled on a Common Nighthawk nestled on the ground right beside the path, about 3 feet away from me. I was able to photograph it.

The trip was a fabulous success, owing in no small part to our trip leader, Mike Tove, who organized and promoted it. So if you love to watch hawks, and especially falcons, you should add Kiptopeke to your list of places to visit. And if the hawk flight is lackluster, birding for passerines along Kiptopeke's birdy trails is a special treat you will not want to miss.



Common Nighthawk (photo by Eddie Owens)

A Memorial for Doug Shadwick

David Smith, President CHBC

As you know by now, Doug Shadwick, our field trip leader for 25 years, died on June 25, 2014. (See last month's newsletter:

<http://chbc.carolinanature.com/b201409.pdf>.) He was a patient and knowledgeable guide and a congenial birding companion. For many of us, he provided our first introduction to the best birding spots in the Triangle area.

To keep Doug's memory alive, we will sponsor one of the benches on the Mason Farm boardwalk on which some members have worked – lugging lumber, screwing down boards. With its dedication party on October 15, the first section is now complete and includes two beautiful Adirondack-style benches built by volunteers Carl Anderson and Bill Daniell. The CHBC will cover the material cost of one bench and mount a plaque on “Doug's bench” saying:

Given in memory of Doug Shadwick (1950-2014) by members of the Chapel Hill Bird Club.

To contribute members, and other friends of Doug, can contribute to this project. Checks can be made out to Chapel Hill Bird Club. The club is not a 501(c)3 organization, so if you want to take a tax deduction, make your check payable to Mason Farm Biological Reserve. Checks can be sent to our treasurer, Patsy Bailey, or brought to the next Bird Club meeting on October 27.

You can also make a contribution securely online: visit

<http://ncbg.unc.edu/become-a-member/>, then click the link “making a donation” in the yellow box. Be sure to select Mason Farm Biological Reserve Endowment as the fund to which you want to donate.

Next Meeting

24 November 2014 – John Gerwin (Ecuador) Hummingbirds and Tanagers and Manakins – Oh My!



The hawk watch group



Doug's bench