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Doug Pratt

Chapel Hill Bird Club Bulletin

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Next Meeting: Monday, October 26

When/where: 7:15 pm refreshments;
7.30 pm meeting. Olin T Binkley
Baptist Church, corner of Highway
15-501 Bypass and Willow Drive,
behind University Mall, Chapel Hill.

Some members gather for dinner at the K&W Cafeteria (University Mall) at 6 pm before the meeting. Go to the back room after making your meal selection.

October 26 Irene Liu: *Sex, Lies, and videotaped blackbirds*

Biologists used to think copulation was the finish line for an animal's reproductive success, but we now know that sperm of different males compete to fertilize a female's eggs. Advances in DNA sequencing mean we can examine this competition on a genetic level. How does this post-mating competition drive the evolution of species? Irene Liu

studied the behavior and genes of three species of North American blackbirds to address this and other questions.

Welcome New Members!



Jan Hansen, Chapel Hill
Susan Blackford, Chapel Hill

Saturday Field Trips

Rob Rybczynski leads field trips for the Chapel Hill Bird Club. The trips are every Saturday – **except in the summer** – and leave from Glen Lennox Shopping Center on Highway 54 in Chapel Hill at 7.30 am.

To List or Not to List?

Birders can get quite bent out of shape over the listing question – which has always caused me to wonder why, what's it to you? The oddest reasons can be

offered to justify such strong feelings – many of which are clearly misguided. Competitive birding? As in Big Years or Big Days – adds a different twist to looking for birds. Perhaps those most involved with the competitive aspects are also those who refer to birding as a sport. Nevertheless, whether you only watch birds at your feeder or chase rarities all over the country (or world) -- there's room for everyone in the big tent that is birding.

But to go back to listing. If you do list, do you report your lists to the American Birding Association (ABA)? The ABA publishes annually the top listers in every possible territorial breakdown of the United States including each state. Of the top 50 life lists (all 800+) (that are most recently reported to ABA) only 8 are women (the highest coming in 13th with 830). The highest reporting lister has seen an amazing 910 birds in the ABA area. Among the top 25 photographers (highest is 845), there is only one woman. Among year (2014) listers there are 4 women among the top 25 for ABA, but for world listers in the 12 months of 2014, the top lister is a woman (with 1880).

Of the nine people who have seen over 8000 birds in the world, only #9 is a woman – but let us not forget that the first birder to top 8000 was Phoebe Snetsinger who did so nearly 20 years ago.

(P. Snetsinger, *Birding on Borrowed Time*; ABA 2003.)

Of course, none of this says a thing about the real world of birding – the size of your list and whether it is reported to ABA has nothing to do with your identification skills, bird finding ability, or persistence. It's possible to have a big list (even without much skill) with the time (and money) available to take organized trips, hire guides, and the stamina to hike many miles in adverse conditions.

The aspects of birding that appeal to us vary widely – and not only (though possibly partly) by gender. ID challenges, birders' camaraderie the chase, new places to see (some spectacular scenery as well as landfills and sewage ponds), are all part of it, as is the competitiveness for some. Not to be underestimated is the fact that birds are just plain interesting – this month's meeting topic being a prime example.

What turns you on to birding? Is it the same now as when you first started?

Coming meetings

November 23 Kent Fiala: On a visit to Peru in October 2014 we saw birds from the sublime to the ridiculous (Hoatzin to Marvelous Spatuletail) as well as a couple of recently discovered species that have been seen by, at most, no

more than a couple of hundred birders – the Scarlet-banded Barbet and the near mythical Long-whiskered Owlet.

December: No meeting, Happy Holidays!

2016

January 25 Caren Cooper: Citizen Science and Stewardship: Birds & Beyond. Birds as indicators of environmental health. Caren Cooper is an avian ecologist and relies on citizen science to help communities use birds as indicators of environmental health.

February 22 Lynn Mosely: Return of the Eagles. Only 8 nesting pairs in the state in 1994. Mosely documented one pair for 22 years.

March 28 Robbie Fearn: Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary – Preserving Paradise. The critical balance between a nature center & an IBA.

April 25 Jesse Birkhead: Conserving Breeding Habitat for Grassland Birds in a Changing Agricultural Landscape. Native forage improves the delicate balance.

May 16 David Smith: Birds of New Zealand and Tasmania. From fabulous endangered endemics to horrible misguided introductions. Natural and unnatural selection have led to a precarious balance.

Officers of the Chapel Hill Bird Club

Elected Officers

President: David Smith
(davidjudysmith@frontier.com)
Vice President (Durham area): Eddie Owens
(banjoman_57@yahoo.com)
Vice President (Chapel Hill area): Kent Fiala
(kent.fiala@gmail.com)
Treasurer: Patricia Bailey
(pbailey_489@yahoo.com)
Secretary: Edith Tatum
(ektatum@nc.rr.com)

Appointed Officers

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Field Trip Chairman: Bob Rybczynski
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