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Brown-headed Nuthatch by Doug Pratt

## Chapel Hill Bird Club Bulletin

January 2016

Volume 44 No. 1

### Next Meeting

**Monday, January 25, 2016**

**Time and location:** 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, NC

Members and guests are welcome to gather for dinner at the K & W Cafeteria (University Mall) at 6 pm before the meeting. Go to the back room of the cafeteria to join the group after making your dinner selection.

### January 25, 2016 Program

**Citizen Science and Stewardship: Birds and Beyond.**

**Speaker: Caren Cooper**

When Caren Cooper conducts studies of bird populations, she relies on data provided by multitudes of unpaid assistants from all across the country. Initiatives like the Christmas Bird Count and the Nest Watch program enlist an army of citizen scientists whose contributions are rapidly changing the way she and other scientists study bird

life. Join us as Caren Cooper describes her passion to engage citizen scientists to study bird ecology and wildlife conservation.

Caren is the assistant director of the Biodiversity Research Lab at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. She is an avian ecologist and relies on citizen science to help communities use birds as indicators of environmental health.

### Saturday Field Trips

Bob Rybczynski leads field trips for the Chapel Hill Bird Club. The trips are every Saturday, except during the summer, and leave at 7:30 a.m. from the Glen Lennox Shopping Center on Highway 54 in Chapel Hill.

### Welcome New Members

Don Darmer and Carol Connolly,  
Chapel Hill  
Tait Chandler, Carrboro

# Happy New Year, Chapel Hill Bird Club Members!

by David Smith, CHBC President

Now that the holiday celebrations are over, let's take a moment to look at the recent past and future of the club. What did we accomplish last year? What great events did we experience? And what do we anticipate in the year ahead?

2015 was a good year for the Club. Attendance at meetings was strong, averaging over 30, and there were visitors and first-time members (sometimes lots of them) at every meeting. Our vice-presidents Eddie Owens, Kent Fiala, and Anne Dayer found excellent speakers. In 2015 we learned about native plants that benefit birds; we got some behind-the-scenes insight into field biology in Colombia; we heard about the unique advantages and threats that affect island-dwelling birds; we listened to the repertoire of Northern Mockingbird songs; we visited the coastal island sanctuaries managed by NC Audubon; we explored the lives of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (and a few others) in North Carolina; we studied the sordid sex lives of blackbirds; and we visited northern Peru.

We also got outside, joining Bob Rybczynski for the Saturday morning field trips or participating in Spring, Fall, or Christmas Bird Counts or Breeding Bird Surveys.

Membership of our Facebook group continued to increase, surpassing 200. We used that forum to spread the news of upcoming meetings and trips and also to

share sightings, photos, and ID questions and generally stay in touch with fellow birders.

The club depends on volunteers to get everything done. In 2015, Anne Dayer joined the board as vice-president (replacing Kent Fiala) and Sue and Fred Schroeder took over as co-secretaries, replacing Edith Tatum. And very recently, in response to an urgent plea, Mary George agreed to take on the production of our monthly newsletter, The Bulletin, replacing Judith Fortney. We're grateful to those who are retiring from office after years of good service, to those who are taking their places, and in fact to all of our members who help out in any way.

And now we look ahead to 2016. Of course there will be great presentations at our monthly meetings, as we learn about birds as far away as New Zealand and as near as central North Carolina. And of course there will be great field trips every Saturday morning. But the Chapel Hill Bird Club is yours. Do you have ideas about a great meeting presentation? A new way for us to connect with others who love watching birds? A new way for us to be active in support of the birds of the Triangle and beyond? Get involved!

The Chapel Hill Bird Club is strong in 2016, and you are a part of it. Join us at our meetings and field trips.

## Upcoming Meetings

**February 22 Lynn Moseley: Return of the Eagles.** In 1994 a pair of Bald Eagles began nesting at one of Greensboro's city lakes. It was one of only eight pairs of Bald Eagles in the entire state. Lynn Moseley will talk about the decline and subsequent recovery of Bald Eagles in North America from the perspective of this special pair whose successes and failures she documented for 22 years. Don't miss this opportunity to hear Lynn share personal stories about her experiences with these special birds.

**March 28 Robbie Fearn: Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary – Preserving Paradise.** Balancing uses in the development of a nature center in an Important Bird Area is critically important. Come learn about plans for the development of the Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary in Corolla NC, a climate stronghold for birds that is listed in the top 5% of locations nationally. Located at a historic duck hunting lodge, the future for this site involves research into habitat response to sea level rise and immersive adult education.

**April 25 Jessie Birckhead: Conserving Breeding Habitat for Grassland Birds in a Changing Agricultural Landscape.** Jessie Birckhead, Conservation Coordinator for the NC Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, will discuss challenges facing grassland birds in agricultural landscapes and how the cattle industry can better accommodate breeding grassland birds by using native warm-season forages.

**May 23 David Smith: Birds of New Zealand and Tasmania.** The wildlife of New Zealand encompasses everything from fabulous endangered endemics to horribly misguided introduced species. Natural and un-natural selection have led to a precarious balance, but the country offers great opportunities to the traveling birder. David and Judy Smith will share photos and memories of their trip to New Zealand and also to the Australian island-state of Tasmania. Expect everything from Albatross to Wallaby, with a couple of devils thrown in.

### Happy Birthday Carolinabirds!

Will Cook created and has been maintaining and chronicling Carolinabirds since it was hatched in December, 1996...19 years ago! Seventeen original hatchlings subscribed to the site in 1996. By 2015 the numbers of subscribers had grown to a large flock of 1472. Although the majority of subscribers to Carolinabirds are from North and South Carolina, they also come from a total of 30 states and the District of Columbia as well as Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, France and Scotland. Carolinabirds serves as an excellent e-mail forum to discuss wild birds, birders, and birding in the Carolinas, including rare birds, bird finding, bird identification, bird behavior, backyard birding, trip reports, bird counts, and bird club information. If you haven't had the opportunity to subscribe to Carolinabirds, instructions can be found at <http://www.carolinanature.com/birds/cbirds.html>  
Thank you Will and happy birthday Carolinabirds!

# Eagle Nest Monitoring by Kayak by Ginger Travis

Jan. 8, 11AM, somewhere on Jordan Lake: We launch our kayaks off an old roadbed in the woods, 200 feet inland from the normal shoreline, and we paddle down the flooded roadway through the pines to get to open water. The lake is 14 feet above normal on this day. Every Jordan boat ramp is closed, parking lots and campsites are under water, and there is not a soul on the lake that we can see. It's also 45 degrees with mist and light rain. But we're on a mission -- to do our first eagle nest monitoring of the year.

Mary Darling is a new monitor, so we're taking this first trip together so she can see how it's done. I'm in my 11th year as a volunteer monitor. We'll alternate visits after this, every two weeks through June -- or until we see fledging. We actually have two nests to check on each trip; they're a mile apart and one is right on the way to the other.

Thirteen eagle nests at Jordan are being watched this year, up sharply from five to six nests just a few years ago. Monitoring of reproduction was required back when eagles were listed as endangered. Today the Corps of Engineers continues the practice even though eagles have recovered sufficiently to be de-listed. Conservation biologist Francis Ferrell runs the program with a gang of volunteers in addition to Corps, Wildlife, and county and state park employees.



Launching on a flooded roadbed, Jordan Lake, Jan. 8. All boat ramps were closed. Photo credit: Ginger Travis

It's a point of pride for me that one of my nests is almost unfindable and can be observed only down one narrow 250-yard-long sight line in a marsh. Once the deciduous trees leaf out I need a spotting scope to tell what's happening at the nest, and the only place to set up a tripod is out in the water. (See photo.) And to reach this marsh requires a nine-mile roundtrip. What would I do for adventure in my quiet life if not this?! (And misadventure too: once my kayak blew away while I was standing in the muck.)

Mary and I find the eagle pair at home. One perches 600 yards from the nest, the other about 200 yards away; they're keeping an eye on their territory. Our other nest has only one eagle perched nearby. It was newly constructed last year but apparently not occupied then. It'll be fun to see what happens this year.

So why do this job by kayak?

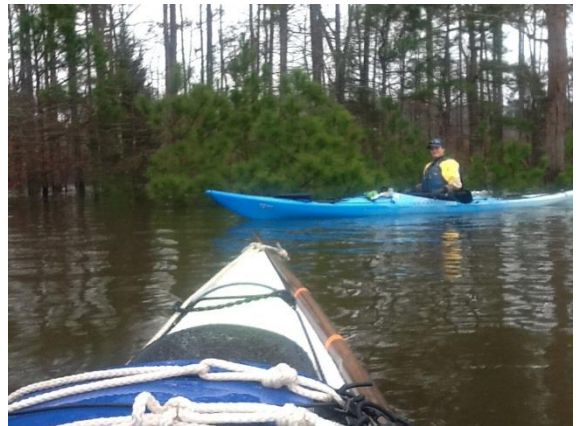
Because it's a blast. Because some nests are so deep in wetlands that reaching them on foot would be difficult and unpleasant. And, in my case, because as a woman alone out there I feel infinitely safer in my boat than I do tramping down some old logging road right off a heavily traveled highway.

Over the years I've seen a nest failure only once. I've seen a nice brood of three chicks a couple of times. I've seen three different trees used successively in one marsh over about a 10-year period demonstrating strong site fidelity by the resident pair. And I've heard a King Rail or two grunting while I sat waiting for some eagle action -- for a chick to show itself over the nest rim or an adult to fly in with food. There's always something interesting on the lake or in the marsh.

Safety is a big concern for me -- and should be for anyone paddling in winter and early spring. The water temperature on Jan. 8 was 57. In winter I wear a drysuit and, year-round, a lifevest, and I wait for a fair-weather window. If possible I also go with another paddler. You know the saying? "There are old paddlers, and there are bold paddlers. But there are no old, bold paddlers: I'm an old paddler!"



Mary Darling checking an eagle nest Jan. 8, Jordan Lake.  
Photo credit: Ginger Travis

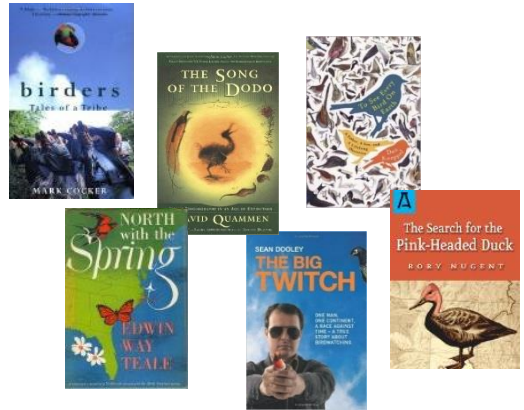


Young pines flooded up to their tops; the lake was 14 feet above normal, Jan. 8. Photo credit: Ginger Travis

In May I also do spring bird counts on Jordan with CHBC member Marty McClelland. Currently the Chapel Hill count could use one or more participants in a canoe or kayak to cover the parts of University Lake not observable from the shore. (The lake rents these boats.) If you're interested and want more info, please give me a shout at [ginger\\_travis@bellsouth.net](mailto:ginger_travis@bellsouth.net) There are good, easy, relatively safe places to hop in a kayak or canoe during the warm months and look at some cool birds (University Lake is a perfect example.) I'd love to see more boating birders out there!

## Enjoyable Books to Add to Your Reading List by Patsy Decker

Thank you Patsy for sharing a list of some of your favorite birding and nature books with commentary!



- North with the Spring by Edwin Way Teale: A delightful account of driving from Florida north to New England. 1951
- Wild America: The Record of a 30,000 Mile Journey Around the Continent by a Distinguished Naturalist and His British Colleague by Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher 1953.
- Tales of a Low-rent Birder by Pete Dunne. A Collection of Essays. 1986
- Birding on Borrowed Time by Phoebe Snetsinger. A posthumously written account of one woman's goal to see more bird species in the world than anyone else.
- Kingbird Highway: The Story of a Natural Obsession that Got a Little Out of Hand by Kenn Kaufman 1997.
- The Big Twitch, One Man, One Continent, A Race Against Time. A True Story about Birdwatching by Sean Dooley. An Australian's account of his big year. 2005
- The Big Year, A Tale of Man, Nature and Fowl Obsession by Mark Obmascik. Three top birders vying for seeing the most birds in North America in one year. 1998
- To See Every Bird on Earth: A Father, a Son and a Lifelong Obsession by Dan Koepfel. An account of a son's attempt to come to terms with his father's obsession. A good portrait of the personalities, skills, drive and obsession involved in hardcore birding.
- Birders: Tales of a Tribe by Mark Cocker. A marvelous account of hardcore twitchers in England. 2002
- The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinction by David Quammen. Not limited to birds, but an interesting scientific investigation into saving habitat. Well written and readily understandable by the layman. Doesn't read like a text book, in fact, I remember laughing out loud.
- Wesley the Owl by Stacey O'Brien. A fascinating tale of a scientist who raised a barn owl and make some interesting observations and questioned some previously held behavioral study methods.
- The Biggest Twitch – Around the World in 4000 Birds by Alan Davies and Ruth Miller. These two Brits did a world big year in 2008. A lot of logistics was involved.
- A Parrot Without a Name: The Search for the Last Unknown Birds on Earth by Don Stap. A tribute to Ted Parker, one of the great ornithologists of his time.
- The Search for the Pink-headed Duck by Rory Nugent. A fascinating account and a travelogue through India in search of the Pink-headed Duck that hadn't been documented for over 50 years.

## Officers of the Chapel Hill Bird Club

### Elected Officers

**President:** David Smith  
([davidjudysmith@frontier.com](mailto:davidjudysmith@frontier.com))

**Co-Vice President:** Eddie Owens  
([banjoman\\_57@yahoo.com](mailto:banjoman_57@yahoo.com))

**Co-Vice President:** Anne Dayer  
([annedayer@gmail.com](mailto:annedayer@gmail.com))

**Treasurer:** Patricia Bailey  
([pbailey\\_489@yahoo.com](mailto:pbailey_489@yahoo.com))

**Secretaries:** Sue and Fred Schroeder  
([fschroed@mindspring.com](mailto:fschroed@mindspring.com))

### Appointed Officers

**Bird Count Supervisor/compiler:**  
Will Cook ([cwcook@duke.edu](mailto:cwcook@duke.edu))

**Field Trip Chairman:** Bob Rybczynski  
([cwcook@duke.edu](mailto:cwcook@duke.edu))

**Bulletin Editor:** Mary George  
([mcgeorge44@gmail.com](mailto:mcgeorge44@gmail.com))

**Webmaster:** Will Cook  
([cwcook@duke.edu](mailto:cwcook@duke.edu))

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### Chapel Hill Bird Club Membership Form

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Subscription length: 1 year  2 years  Renewal?   
(\$15 per year for individual/family, \$10 per year for student)

Make check payable to "Chapel Hill Bird Club" and mail to  
Patsy Bailey  
277 Mint Springs Road  
Pittsboro, NC 27312