



Come to our February Program Meeting!

Lynn Moseley—Leks, Sex, and the Buff-breasted Sandpiper

When: Monday, February 24, 2025 at 7:15pm (light refreshments served at 7:15, program to start at 7:30)

Where: Binkley Baptist Church, 1712 Willow Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27514 or on [Zoom](#)

RSVP: Let us know you are coming by responding to our [Facebook event](#). To attend by Zoom, register to get the Zoom link [here](#).

ABOUT THE FEBRUARY PROGRAM. About 90% of bird species are socially monogamous, with a single male and female forming a pair bond and raising young. But about 100 species exhibit a usual type of breeding behavior in which males in a small group defend individual territories in an area known as a lek. These territories are used exclusively for courtship displays and mating, and the males play no role in incubation or raising the young. This program will give examples of lekking species and explore why this behavior has evolved.

Lynn retired several years ago from Guilford College, where she was the Charles A. Dana Professor of Biology, and Chair of the Division of Natural Sciences and Math. Her Bachelor's degree in Biology is from the College of William and Mary (she took Ornithology from Dr. Byrd). She received her Ph.D in Zoology from UNC-Chapel Hill. At Guilford College Lynn taught courses in Ornithology, Animal Behavior, Vertebrate Zoology, and Outer Banks Ecology. Her research focused on Least Terns on the barrier islands of North Carolina, and later on Bald Eagles that nested in the Piedmont. Dr. Moseley has led many trips with students, alumni, and friends of Guilford College to observe wildlife in the American Southwest, East Africa, the Galapagos Islands, Nicaragua, Brazil, and Costa Rica.



Find the lineup of future speakers on our [website here](#).

Raffle to Benefit the CHBC



Come early at 7:15 for light refreshments and to buy raffle tickets for a chance to win a set of six wildlife photography note cards (all bird images, of course!) by local wildlife photographer Kelly Mieszkalski.

Raffle tickets are \$3 each, or 2 for \$5 (cash or check accepted). 100% of the raffle proceeds go to the Club to support costs for us to design a new logo!

Additional donations for this important cause are appreciated.

My 2024 Chapel Hill Bird Count

By Alex Nickley

The day began at 7AM on December 22nd. I started, as usual, at the NC botanical garden parking lot. I had considered mixing it up and beginning at one of the swamplier areas but decided against it. I had a fairly normal start and was checking off some of the more common birds vocalizing as I waited for the sun to wash over the landscape (and warm me up!). Scanning the sky I saw a large flock in V formation. I thought it must be Canada Goose, but after taking a look, I saw it was some 60+ Double-crested Cormorant! Not an easy find for this block, so perhaps a good omen!

Tromping around Mason Farm water treatment plant I was able to get Mourning Dove and Killdeer. Chippy (Chipping Sparrow) and Field Sparrow before that. Those were all good finds for the early morning as they, surprisingly, are not automatic. I thought about skipping Laurel Hill (piedmont trails) but decided it was an important ritual. Not much there but nice to catch the sun as I mounted the summit, the valley

bathed in light. Got Pine Warbler at the botanical garden suet! Made sure to wait for that one as I dipped on Pine Warbler for the Durham count (hard when they're not singing). I stayed around for a bit more in hopes for something crazy like a western tanager or painted bunting... yeah, that didn't happen. Back to the car for some hot coffee and a thorough thawing of my frozen hands. Thought I'd save the hike along Morgan Creek out to Merrit's Pasture for Spring... too cold and not enough time to spare.



Next was "Few Lake", apparently on the property of a prominent local family. Had to check it out for chance for ducks. And it was a hit! Two Hooded Mergansers and a Pied-billed Grebe that I had to work for (just hints of it before it disappeared under the surface taking several minutes to reemerge).

After that it was to the "wetlands", the Little Creek waterfowl impoundment spots north of Farington. Started fairly slow despite a freshly mowed powercut and easy access. I eventually heard the emblematic "jib jib" of Common Yellowthroat (!!), a showcase CBC bird I've had here once before. Better make sure I'm not confirmation biasing my way to that one! Fortunately, I was able to spot its bright yellow undertail coverts as it skirted back into the reeds. Also had a complete surprise Wild Turkey fly up to a pine and then flush where I could assess its hefty girth. Kicked around in the flooded swamp in hopes of more goodies but just the usual suspects (including lots of Red-headed Woodpeckers). Then lunch in Carborro with Heidi (LOVE). Then off to Merrit's Pasture for some very distant Red-tailed Hawks (check!).

I thought about forgoing the Parker Preserve and requisite sojourn to the big grass to the South but decided I'd better do it. And good thing! After some patience and working through nerves seeing Coyote that I thought might be farm doggy, I saw American Kestrel fly up to perch atop pine! This is a block first for me and a bird I always thought possible here (score!). Also a fav. Didn't get Savannah Sparrow or other goodie sparrows but did get Eastern Meadowlarks (!) and huge flock of Red-winged Blackbird. Big grass so also big sky; scanned for raptors. Eventually got one!

What looked like an eagle, but maybe just deceptive Turkey Vulture? Brown overall with somewhat lighter flight feathers. Head was too big for TUVU. Noticed significant bulge of secondaries. No teetering like Turkey Vulture, just strong flaps and glide riding up thermal. Tail looked relatively short, squarish. Had strong thoughts of Golden Eagle, which would be an epic CBC find. Took several pics with phone through binoculars but IDK if it's good enough for ID¹. Ahhhhh!!! Best be moving on to get the House Sparrow kicking around the restaurant dumpsters before it's too late (my go-to spot for em', check!).

Still had time, so back to Farrington Rd. to see what flies south toward the lake for sunset. Lots of Red-winged Blackbirds in successive flocks of 10-50. And what I was hoping for! Three gulls including one that was larger and uniformly brown. Got to be Ring-billed Gull with one Herring Gull friend. And for number 60, the elusive Pileated Woodpecker flies out from the pines. It was quite a rewarding CBC. Certainly, my best for the block, maybe the GOAT for Laurel Hill. Of course, as I get to know the block, the possibilities increase. Kestrel in the big grass....

For Alex's full eBird report (including photos of the golden eagle, American Kestrel, and rusty blackbird), click [here](#).

¹The CHBC review committee confirmed my poor-quality photos for Golden Eagle making it the first recorded for the CBC!! This bird tortured me for days as I felt strongly it was GOEA but could never quite extinguish the kernel of doubt that this was something more common that I conjured into epic find. Here's the original field notes: Very large, dark raptor that immediately struck me as an eagle flying over beef farm adjacent to Parker Preserve. Wings held at slight dihedral. Of course, I was thinking deceptive TUVU but on careful study of the bird I noticed no teetering emblematic of TUVU flight. I noticed a couple of wingbeats followed by soar as it apparently was catching thermal. Head projection too large for TUVU. Too uniformly dark for BAEA and seemed off in terms of wing shape (bulging secondaries immediately noticed; again, dihedral shape). Did notice somewhat lighter flight feathers but the bird looked more or less solid brown overall. Tail seems relatively short and squarish. Distant but not extremely so. Probably an easy ID for someone more experienced with soaring raptors (GOEA??)... I thought on this for some time (somewhat obsessively for days, actually 😊) thinking it to be GOEA but perhaps it's too difficult to call unless photos are diagnostic. Wing shape and head size seems characteristic. One photo reveals yellow base to bill with black tip (difficult to see, though!). Took several distant photos with iPhone

through bins; uploaded to eBird checklist (photo files may be higher quality before they are uploaded to eBird).

It's Time to Renew Your Membership!



renew/join now [here](#).

You are invited to renew your membership or join the Chapel Hill Bird Club for calendar year 2025! Dues are now \$25 per calendar year for individuals and families (and you can pay for two years at a time), and are still just \$10 for students. Dues received during any part of the year will only be credited for that calendar year—so

The purpose of the Chapel Hill Bird Club is to provide engagement and educational opportunities for area birders of all experience levels. We offer interesting educational programs, local birding field trips, Christmas and spring bird counts, and connection to other members via a Facebook group. Members have access to like-minded people including experts who can answer your questions. Whether you watch birds in your yard or travel to the ends of the earth to chase rarities, our club offers something for you. We are a friendly group and welcome all to join us, especially new birders! Our members are mostly from the Research Triangle area of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, Cary, Pittsboro, and surrounding towns. Click [here](#) for our current issue of the Chapel Hill Bird Club Bulletin!

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Our mailing address is:

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