

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

c/o C. W. Cook
418 Sharon Rd.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514



Vol. XXVIII, No. 2

February 1999

Monthly Meeting

Monday, February 22, 1999, at 7 pm

Program *Ducks and Geese of North America*

Presented by CHBC member Joe Fisher

Location — Binkley Baptist Church, the Lounge.
Binkley is on Willow Drive at 15-501 in Chapel Hill,
near University Mall.

February Meeting Program

by Ginger Travis

Our speaker will be Chapel Hill Bird Club member Joe Fisher, showing slides of about 40 species of ducks and geese he's photographed in the U.S. and Canada. This program should be a big help to those of us who are still learning to identify waterfowl, including the species that winter here in the Triangle on ponds and lakes. Joe is a New Hampshire native and has been a birder since age 12. Now retired, he became serious a few years ago about photographing birds and has systematically worked on certain groups. So come to the meeting on Feb. 22 to see his photo gallery of North American waterfowl.

Coming up:

March 22: Harry LeGrand on techniques for monitoring bird populations (i.e., what, when, and how we count).

September 27: Mike Tove on Hawk ID.

Field Trips

Saturday morning trips leave the Glen Lennox parking lot (on the north side of 54 just east of the intersection with 15-501 in Chapel Hill) at 7:30 am sharp and return by noon. Reservations are not necessary. Beginners and visitors are welcome! Bring binoculars, boots (or old tennis shoes), a scope if you've got one, and be prepared for a hike. Contact Doug Shadwick (942-0479) for more details. Here's the tentative schedule:

Feb. 20 - Western Orange County - Cane Creek

Feb. 27 - Falls Lake (south)

Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27 - to be announced

800+ Pound Birdseed Thief

by Mary Stevens, Raven Rock SP

Recently I have noticed my tray feeders were completely empty when I would wake up at 5:30 am. I thought it was a raccoon or possum and did not give it much thought until last week. I let my dog out and she started barking her "there is something out here bark" as opposed to her "gee, lets wake everyone up bark." When I went out to investigate I saw my neighbors horse standing there munching on the millet and sunflower ground feeder and their donkey was nibbling at the hanging feeder. Since grazing animals apparently like bird seed it could be possible that the deer around here are feeding on the seed too.

1998 Bird Lists

by Will Cook

A few weeks ago I posted a request on Carolinabirds for folks to send in their bird life list totals (as of 12/31/98) for various areas. The ABA (American Birding Association) Area is North America north of Mexico. Here are the results:

	World
Alan Johnston	1530
Dan Kaplan	1214
Jeff Phippen	1060
Josh Rose	821
Will Cook	571
Bruce Young	339

Membership Information

Calendar-year (Jan.-Dec.) dues for most individuals and families are \$15; for students, \$10. If you wish to renew for more than one year, multiply the annual dues rate times the number of years. Please send your check (payable to the Chapel Hill Bird Club) to club treasurer Fran Hommersand, 304 Spruce Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. If you have questions, please call Fran at 967-1745.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____ - _____

E-mail _____

	ABA
Dan Kaplan	702
Norm Budnitz	652
Ricky Davis	647
Terry Cox	624
Josh Rose	609
Jeff Pippen	594
Will Cook	561
Clyde Sorenson	535
Erik Thomas	407
Emily DeVoto	405
Bruce Young	339

	NC
Ricky Davis	398
Jeff Pippen	361
Will Cook	357
Dan Kaplan	316
Clyde Sorenson	301
Josh Rose	241
Bruce Young	223

The Triangle Area includes all of Chatham, Durham, Orange, and Wake Counties, plus those areas of Falls Lake in Granville County.

	Triangle
Ricky Davis	282
Will Cook	249
Jeff Pippen	240
Bruce Young	186
Josh Rose	168

	Chatham
Will Cook	210
Jeff Pippen	185
Bruce Young	146
Josh Rose	100

	Durham
Will Cook	198
Jeff Pippen	186
Bruce Young	135
Josh Rose	130

	Orange
Will Cook	176
Jeff Pippen	167
Bruce Young	131
Josh Rose	49

	Wake
Will Cook	161
Jeff Pippen	130
Bruce Young	115
Josh Rose	67

	Granville
Will Cook	133
Josh Rose	66

	Yard
Norm Budnitz	126
Clyde Sorenson	106
Ginger Travis	102 (including 24 warblers!)
Will Cook	98
Jeff Pippen	89
Josh Rose	27

The Saga of the Ring-necks

by Clyde Sorenson, 1/20/99

About 6 weeks ago, we had a female Ring-necked Duck show up on the one acre pond behind my house. This was fairly exciting, since it was the first wild duck (other than the woodies that nested in my nest box last spring) to show up since we moved in two and a half years ago. It hung around for about a week and then disappeared. Two weeks ago, a single male Ring-necked appeared, and it too stuck around for a few days then left. Seven days ago, we saw four, one hen and three drakes. The next day, 11. The following day, 21. The day after that, 33. Three days ago, only 11 again. Two days ago, 35; yesterday, 43. Today, we had 61 Ring-necked Ducks and the big bonus, a spectacular pair of Canvasbacks. I am tremendously curious about how these additional birds are locating the pond and from what larger body of water they are coming (I live outside Clayton about 1/2 mile straight-line from the Neuse River); are they following the first birds that first found it, or are they high passing birds "decoying" to those first colonizers? There have been about seven domestic ducks and geese on the pond since we moved in. I also wonder why no wild ducks were on the pond the previous two winters. (The pond has, and has had, a rather luxuriant growth of something like coon-tail.) I am anxious to see if the trend continues!

More Ring-necks

by Clyde Sorenson, 1/21/99

This morning, I stood out on my deck from first light till the birds stopped coming in. They came in in singles, pairs, and small parties of 5- 10, not in one or two large flocks. Most of the birds arrived between 6:50 and 7:15. There were approximately 60 again this morning. These birds are executing the most spectacular acrobatics to settle on this small pond; the Blue Angels have absolutely nothing on them. They typically appear at about 150-200 feet altitude and they are moving at an incredible rate of speed, as though they have dropped rapidly from greater altitude. They then make one tight, banking circle and then pitch steeply into the pond, flare, and land. The rushing sound on that circle is incredible, like nothing so much as a jet airplane; I have listened to, and loved, this sound for over 25 years, but it is still a marvel to me. It seems to me that Ring-necks make more of this rushing noise than most other species; back when Lake

Wheeler entertained many hundreds of ducks over winter, one could always tell when another flock of Ring-necks was returning by the much louder noise. One pitched down directly over the roof of my house, within 15 or 20 feet of the ridge line. I can't wait until tomorrow morning for the next show! The ducks basically remain on the pond all day unless disturbed by a neighbor or a dog, and they don't return if they are flushed.

There was also a pair of Wood Ducks on the pond near the nest boxes this morning. No sign of the Canvasbacks by the time I left for work.

Sightings

Rufous Hummingbird in Hillsborough

by Jeff Phippen, 12/12/98

The hummingbird reported from the Hillsborough, NC area a couple of days ago is a Rufous/Allen's type. It's an immature male or female plumaged bird with no colored gorget feathers. The bird showed a fair amount of rufous wash on the sides, flanks, and rump area. The top of the head was a bronze-green color, while the back was mostly green to golden-green. The undersides of the tail feathers were tipped with white, although the bird never fanned it's tail while perched, so no feeling for the relative width of the tail feathers was determined. (Allen's have relatively narrower outer tail feathers compared to the inner tail feathers, but this can be very difficult to see "in the field".) The tips of the wings extended slightly beyond the tail feathers. The chin was unmarked, but the throat showed light, broken streaks. The lower central throat showed a small dark patch. The bird was fairly aggressive, chasing chickadees around some of the trees.

It was first attracted to the yard by flowering pineapple sage, and then the homeowner put up a feeder, which it visits fairly regularly.

by Ted Zoller, 2/3/99

It's official, the Hillsborough hummer ("Tequila") is a young female Rufous. The Sargents [noted hummingbird banders of Trussville, Alabama] were able to band the bird on Monday morning. I tried to be there but time not good for me. Bob Sargent reports that the bird has good weight.

Results of Carolina Hummingbird Banding Trip

by Bob Sargent, Trussville, AL, 2/5/99

Martha Sargent and I recently made a one week trip through the Carolinas to document wintering hummers. The following birds were documented:

In South Carolina:

1 Ruby-throated banded in Summerville
1 Black-chinned female on James Island, identified but not banded, still on site.

In North Carolina:

1 Ruby-throated banded in Sunset Beach

3 Ruby-throated banded in Hampstead

4 Rufous banded in Hampstead

1 Ruby-throated banded in Williston

4 Ruby-throated banded in Buxton

1 Ruby-throated banded in Manteo

1 Rufous recaptured in Durham, originally banded at the same site in 1997

1 Rufous banded in Hillsborough ("Tequila")

1 Rufous banded in Asheboro

I would like to thank Carolinabirds for assisting in the location of these hummers and for allowing these results to be posted.

Good luck and God Bless, Bob Sargent, The Hummer/Bird Study Group, Inc. Trussville, Alabama

Dec. 19: Wilson's Warbler in Chapel Hill

by Terry Cox, Summerlin Drive, CH

I put up bird feeders just 2-3 weeks ago. I have one feeder with sunflower and one with thistle. Activity has been sporadic, but at 1 PM on Saturday, December 19, I had a feeding flock of titmice, chickadees, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and goldfinches. As I was looking at all the activity from inside my house, I noticed a smaller yellow bird about 3 feet above the ground in bushes about 30 feet away. This bird flew to a bare branch about 7 feet from the ground next to a tree trunk. At that location it was about 20 feet away and at eye level. It perched facing me for about 15 seconds, then flew away. My observations were made without binoculars.

The body and bill of the bird had the size and shape of a warbler. The bird was uniformly bright yellow below and had a darker olive cast to the back and wings. There were no wing bars. The bird had a dark eye and a distinct black cap.

I first saw a Wilson's warbler 22 years ago in Kansas in the spring, and I have observed them on numerous occasions over the years in many different locations in the US and Canada. I am an experienced birder; I have 624 species on my ABA list, and I have 62 warbler species on my life list.

Jan. 10: Oldsquaws at Jordan Lake...

by Will Cook

At 1:30 on 1/10/99 I spotted a raft of 9 Oldsquaw smack dab in the middle of Jordan Lake. It looks like they might be easily seen from Ebenezer Point, though I saw them from the other side. They're easy to pick out at a great distance if you remember their more fitting English common name — Long-tailed Duck. The males have absurdly long, thin tails that stick up above the water.

I saw them from the shore opposite Ebenezer, between Seaforth and Vista Point. It's not an easy spot to get to, but the gull flock is a lot closer there than at Ebenezer. Directions - cross the lake on US 64, heading west. Take the first left on Seaforth Rd. (opposite Big Woods Rd. on the right). In 1.5 miles, you'll see a gate on the left, opposite Forest Lane (New Hope Trails development). Park near the gate

and walk past it on the old road. Follow this old road past where the lake meets it. Take the next old road to the right after this. Follow this to where it ends at the lake. This is a pretty good scanning spot. You can walk along the shore to the left for an even better vantage. The distance from gate to lake is about 1.5 miles - it took me 25 minutes without stopping to bird on the way back. The road is difficult to follow at times (especially while carrying a scope!) because of many ice-storm and Hurricane Fran downed trees blocking it.

Dozens of Pied-billed and Horned Grebes and Hooded Mergs on the lake. The only other duck I saw was a lone Lesser Scaup. Just saw the usual gulls.

... and More!

by Ricky Davis, Rocky Mount NC

Just thought I would let you folks hear of the excellent morning of birding I had today (Jan. 10) in the Raleigh to Jordan area. I decided to visit the area lakes to check on the waterfowl numbers. My order of visits included L. Wheeler and Greenview pond, L. Johnson, Crabtree Lake, Brier Creek Res., Jordan Res. A list of the good birds follows:

Common Loon - 1 at Wheeler, 5 at Jordan
 Horned Grebe - 32 at Wheeler, 5 at Crabtree, 118 at Jordan
 EARED GREBE - 1 at Jordan (Ebenezer Pt) [also seen 1/8 by Doug Shadwick]
 Great Egret - 1 at Greenview
 Mute Swan - 4 at Wheeler/Greenview, 2 at Johnson
 Tundra Swan - 2 at Wheeler/Greenview
 "EURASIAN" Green-winged Teal 1 at Greenview
 Am. Black Duck - 2 at Johnson, 6 at Crabtree, 4 at Jordan
 Northern Pintail - 1 at Johnson
 Gadwall - 3 at Greenview, 18 at Johnson, 6 at Jordan
 Northern Shoveler - 2 at Greenview
 American Wigeon - 8 at Greenview, 6 at Johnson, 4 at Brier Creek, 2 at Jordan
 Canvasback - 1 at Crabtree, 1 at Brier Creek
 Redhead - 4 at Brier Creek
 Ring-necked Duck - at all locations including 1750 at Brier Creek
 Greater Scaup - 2 at Brier Creek
 Lesser Scaup - at all locations
 OLDSQUAW - 9 at Jordan (Ebenezer Pt)
 Common Goldeneye - 1 at Jordan (Farrington)
 Hooded Merganser - at all locations including 240 at Jordan
 Common Merganser - 3 at Jordan (White Oak) (one male, two females)
 Red-breasted Merganser - 2 at Jordan (Farrington)
 Common Snipe - 45 at Johnson
 Forster's Tern - 1 at Jordan (Ebenezer Pt)
 BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER - 1 at Jordan (Seaforth)

As you can see, it was a most rewarding waterbird (and warbler) day!

Jan. 17: Redheads at Falls Lake

by Jeff Phippen

A couple of hours of birding along the railroad tracks across Falls Lake west of I-85 today (Jan. 17) yielded a few highlights: A mixed flock of ducks included 6 Canvasback, 42 Redhead, and a handful of Ring-neckeds, Gadwall, Mallard, N. Pintail. The passerine highlight was a nice bright yellow Palm Warbler. This was the first time that I've ever been birding in the piedmont and found the most numerous duck to be Redhead!

Feb. 5: Winter Prairie at Falls Lake

by Walton Conway, Boone NC

We were a bit surprised but delighted to find a beautiful Prairie Warbler in the tree tops at Falls Lake (Creedmoor exit off I-85) on Fri. 2/5/99 as we made a quick stop on our way from the mountains to the coast. These observations were made as part of a Outer Banks bird tour lead by Curtis Smalling (Ecos of the Blue Ridge). Participants included Bob Cherry, Judson Conway, Karen, Marilyn, and myself.

Feb. 6: Winter Orchard Oriole near Durham

by Tom Krakauer, Bahama NC

This morning Janet and I were doing our morning perambulation. In an open field along S. Lowell Rd at White Horse Run, there was a sizeable flock of robins. I scanned the flock and much to my delight and surprise, there was a female orchard oriole feeding on the ground among the robins. We were able to observe it for about 10 minutes (until the dog said "enough, already!"). No question about the identification, (The bird was too large to be a warbler, bright yellow breast, belly and rump, the anterior wingbar was larger, and blockier than the others. The bill was oriole, not tanager, or warbler. There was no sign of orange.) Definitely an unexpected sighting!

By the way, it looked as if the robins were ready for breeding. They looked distinctly different from our winter flocks. The males (circular reasoning, I know) had very dark, almost black backs and very orange breasts. The others (presumably females) were less bright top and bottom.

Feb 14: Orchard Oriole Still There!

by Tom Krakauer, Bahama NC

The Orchard Oriole was still in the same location this morning with a flock of robins. Randy Emmitt joined me with his camera and telephoto and took a number of pictures which he will put on the web once he has them processed.

Here are directions for anyone who wants to look for it. Go N on Guess Rd in Durham. Start looking for S. Lowell Rd at 8.8 miles from I-85.

Take a right on S. Lowell and go 0.3 mi to White Horse Run. Park along White Horse Run. The bird has been seen on the left side of S. Lowell either in the field in front of the house or in the field to the left of the house. It has always been visible from the road.

Club officers

President: Monica Nees (968-8549)
 Vice President (CH): Magnus Persmark (933-2255, emp34157@glaxo.com)
 Vice President (Dur): Ginger Travis (942-7746, Ginger.Travis@unc.edu)
 Secretary: Judy Murray (942-2985, jmurray.uncson@mhs.unc.edu)
 Treasurer: Fran Hommersand (967-1745)
 Field Trip Chairman: Doug Shadwick (942-0479, dshadwick@man-env.com)
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