

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

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



Vol. XXVIII, No. 11

November 1999

Monthly Meeting

Monday, November 22, 1999, at 7:30 pm

Program — *Islands of Hope*, presented by Phillip Manning

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

Mattamuskeet at the November Meeting

by Ginger Travis

We're in for a treat on Monday, Nov. 22 at 7:30 when Phillip Manning of Chapel Hill will speak to us about his new book, *Islands of Hope*, which just won the National Outdoor Book Award. Phil traveled the country, eventually choosing 10 notable national wild-life refuges to write about, including a favorite of CHBC members: Mattamuskeet NWR in Hyde County, North Carolina. The lake there is home to thousands of wintering Tundra Swans, Snow Geese, and other waterfowl; to see and hear them is unforgettable. Phil's talk will raise interesting issues in wild-life management, and it should also provide a great lead-in to the Swan Days festival Dec. 4-5 at Lake Mattamuskeet. Bring a friend. And come a few minutes early to enjoy some refreshments and bird chat. See you there!

There's no meeting in December, but mark your calendar for the first CHBC meetings of the year 2000:

Jan. 24 — Scott Hartley — birds of Weymouth Woods

Feb. 28 — John Connors — American Woodcock

March 27 — Susan Campbell — hummingbirds in NC

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.

Nov. 20 — Jordan Lake

Nov. 27 — no field trip because of Thanksgiving

Dec. 4 — Tour of the Raleigh lakes

Dec. 11 — NC 54 Impoundments

Christmas Bird Counts - Sign Up Now!

CBC season is here again! If you would like to help out, sign up today! Beginners are welcome. It's a great way to discover new birding areas and get more familiar with our local winter birds. As usual, there will be a countdown at the K&W Cafeteria in University Mall, Chapel Hill, at 5 pm on Dec. 26.

Raleigh — Sat. 18 Dec.

Bob Hader - 782-1898

or Susan Campbell - ncaves@utinet.net

Durham — Sun. 19 Dec.

Mike Schultz - 490-6761 - mschultz@duke.edu

Chapel Hill — Sun. 26 Dec.

Will Cook - 967-5446 - cwcook@duke.edu

Falls Lake — Sat. 1 Jan.

Brian Bockhahn - 676-1027 - fallslak@bellsouth.net

Jordan Lake — Sun. 2 Jan.

Barbara Roth - 967-4732

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 _____

Shirt-sleeves and shorts in November:

CHBC members cut new trail where the birds are

by *Ginger Travis*

The Johnston Mill Nature Preserve on New Hope Creek in Orange County could become a great birding spot for CHBC members and friends -- with help from our club. The Triangle Land Conservancy recently protected almost a mile of creek frontage from Turkey Farm Rd. up to Mt. Sinai Rd., including bottom-land forest and some steep uplands, by purchasing about 290 acres from a real estate developer. (Several CHBC members donated to this campaign, and New Hope Audubon Society gave \$5,000.) Volunteers from UNC and Duke have already cut a one-mile loop trail on the south and west sides of the preserve.

On Saturday, Nov. 13. six CHBC members and friends started work cutting another northerly trail that will extend along New Hope Creek up to Mt. Sinai Rd. (TLC laid out a route that purposely keeps the trail several yards away from the creek bank to protect it from erosion.) Kent Fiala, Josh Rose, Tracy Feldman, Judy Murray, Will Cook, and Ginger Travis wielded loppers, pruning saws, a rake, and one machete (Josh's, from Belize) on a perfect 70-degree sunny afternoon. More than a quarter-mile of trail was cleared, as woodpeckers, including a hairy, called, a doe splashed across the creek, and one CHBC member fell in [guess who!].

By next spring, a rudimentary trail system will give birders a way to access all of the different habitats in the preserve. (It would be great if one or more CHBC members would like to monitor the birds of Johnston Mill Nature Preserve with visits throughout the year.) To check out the only completed trail on the preserve at this time, park on the shoulder of Turkey Farm Rd. about a hundred yards south of the bridge over New Hope Creek. The trail begins on the west side of the road opposite a mailbox with the number 6012. (Orange flagging on some trees will help you find it.) The trail crosses a small, but deep, branch, goes through low woods, then loops up and around a high area with great beech trees. Eventually TLC plans a small parking area off the road.

New Hummingbird Bander in N.C.

by *Susan Campbell, Whispering Pines*

This week [11/13/99] it became official. I am now a legal hummingbird bander for North and South Carolina. I am also working on a state permit to help out in southern Virginia, if I am needed.

So, please forward any information pertaining to winter hummingbirds in the area to me directly. I can be reached at (910) 949-3207 anytime or by e-mail at ncaves@utinet.net. Bob & Martha Sargent will continue to forward calls they get and will still make some trips up here but I will be the primary contact for North Carolina. Let me emphasize that I am very interested in documenting all winter hummers even if

the property owners do not want their birds caught and banded.

This year was a great breeding season for hummers in the southeast — there seem to be lots around, even though it is now 'winter.' I am expecting a good number of reports and lots of banding activity! Keep those feeders up and filled and let me know if you see or hear about any hummingbirds in the next few months.

Thanks ahead of time for your help. We have started a good network for finding wintering hummers here in the state but I do not think it is anywhere near complete. So spread the word!

Goldfinch at hummingbird feeder

by *Ginger Travis*

Sunday, July 4 I was looking out my kitchen window at the hummingbird feeder hanging right outside. An adult male goldfinch flew up and clasped the vertical wire, then flitted down to a perch on the feeder, put its beak in a feeding port and sipped. Then it moved to another perch where I could see it better and proceeded to insert its beak 7 or 8 times and sip. It looked as though it knew what it was doing. Then it flew away.

This is just the second species, besides ruby-throated hummingbird, that I've seen use a hummingbird feeder in my yard. The other was a Black-throated Blue Warbler several years ago during fall migration.

Psycho Cardinal

by *Marsha Stephens*

Saturday morning (July 10) I awoke to hear a strange scratching sound coming from the roof. At first I thought it may have been squirrels cavorting around, but it seemed to persistent. I went outside to have a look and discovered that a male cardinal was the source of the noise. I have a woodstove with a double-wall, shiny stainless steel pipe that comes out the roof. He would flutter up and down two feet of the pipe, attacking his reflection, pause, and then do it again. He finally stopped when full sun hit the area. I was hoping he'd have enough sense to stop in the heat. Interesting twist to the problems folks have sited previously on this list regarding cardinals attacking windows and car mirrors.

Psycho Pewee

by *Jeff Phippen*

Until today (July 11), I've never seen an Eastern Wood-Pewee in our backyard, although I've heard them around many times. This morning, during breakfast, a pewee showed up and perched on the top of the pole holding my two suet feeders. For the next five minutes, he proceeded to chase off every goldfinch and chickadee that came into the backyard! The pewee would pursue the other bird and in two cases actually drove a goldfinch to the ground, apparently for no reason other than to defend his new perch! A few

minutes later, the pewee flew off, and we haven't seen it since. It was almost as good as professional wrestling...

How does a titmouse eat a blueberry?

by Ginger Travis

Same way it eats a sunflower seed: by holding it clasped between both feet and stabbing it repeatedly with its beak. I guess I shouldn't be surprised, but I was, a little, as I watched a titmouse chow down on a blueberry this morning (August 5) — part of a little frenzied feeding group in my blueberry bushes: a pair of cardinals, a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers (who took each berry back to a tree-trunk perch before eating it), a couple of chickadees and maybe a Red-eyed Vireo. (I have learned that vireos can be great fruit eaters. Last year they stripped the berries off one native viburnum in my yard in two days.) The blueberries are now very, very ripe and full of yellow jackets too.

Field Trip Reports

Oct. 1-10: California Pelagic Extravaganza

by Harriet Sato

When I first heard of the California pelagic extravaganza trip run by Sam Fried of Flights of Fancy Adventures, Inc., of Connecticut, I thought it was just what I needed to familiarize myself with pelagic birds. Till now I had only gone on one whale watch off Montauk Point, Long Island, long ago and had seen some shearwaters and storm-petrels but they had soon vanished from my mind.

Five boat trips were scheduled as well as some land birding for California specialties, and the price was right.

The first 3 boat trips were fantastic. Two were off Monterey, one to the Albacore grounds, another to the sea valley, and one off Santa Cruz. The sea was calm, the calmest seen by Debbie Shearwater of Shearwater Journeys, who ran the trips. And we were lucky. We saw birds that were not ordinarily seen. For me, however, everything was new, the common as well as the uncommon birds. After 3 days Sooty, Buller's, and Pink-footed Shearwaters were quite familiar; as were Northern Fulmar and South Polar Skua. The jaegers were harder to spot, but once spotted, clearly identifiable — all 3, the Pomarine, the Parasitic, and the Long-tailed were seen.

Other life birds for me were Red and Red-necked Phalaropes — not seen as well as I had hoped because they skittered off as soon as the boat neared. It was the same for the storm-petrels. There were an estimated 7000 of them on the water, but as soon as the boat neared, they flew off. Most numerous were Ashy Storm-Petrels. We were told to look for pearly-gray birds, which would be Fork-tailed, and bigger, blacker birds with slower wingbeats, which would be Black Storm-Petrels. I think I saw them, but would be hard-pressed to identify them on my own.

Most notable and conspicuous was the Black-footed Albatross, the only kind we saw. It was the biggest bird around, with its long, slim wingspan, and it glided effortlessly over the water, circling so near the boat that the white crescent at the base of the bill as well as the tail could be easily seen.

Common Murres were common as well as Rhinoceros Auklet. Not so common were Flesh-footed Shearwater, Cassin's Auklet, and Marbled, Xantus's, and Craveri's Murrelets.

California birders were quite as excited as we were at spotting a Thick-billed Murre, which, we were told, is seen in the Santa Cruz area only every 5 years or so.

The fourth boat trip was to Santa Cruz Island, the largest of the Channel Islands National Park system. We landed at the rugged eastern end of the island and walked a rocky path of about a mile to see the endemic Island Scrub-jay, which is larger and brighter than the Western Scrub-jay. To some of us the thrill of the almost vertical climb was another highlight of the trip.

The last boat trip was one too many for some of us. The sea was choppy, the swells hid the birds, and focusing the binoculars as the boat moved up and down was difficult. Besides, no new birds were seen.

For land birding, we did a lot of travelling to visit the various habitats from desert to the mountains. Some life birds for me included Greater Roadrunner, LeConte's and California Thrasher, Bewick's Wren, White-headed Woodpecker, Ferruginous Hawk, Sage Sparrow, Allen's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, the latter seen with Anna's at feeders at leisure as we lunched in the back yard of the manager of a private campground at the base of Mt. Pinnacle National Monument.

A rarity for both California and us was a White-winged Tern. Rarities for California, but not for us, were a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and an Eastern Phoebe. Our group saw 213 species of birds and several mammals, including a Mountain Lion and 6 different kinds of whales and dolphins.

Oct 23: Spectacular Day at Brickhouse

by Will Cook

Five CHBCers went to the gamelands at the end of Brickhouse Road (near Falls Lake) Saturday morning (10/23). As usual, the place was hopping with sparrows, including 5+ White-crowned. This is one of the few spots in the Triangle area where they reliably winter. Ducks and hawks seemed to constantly fill the air - we saw hordes of Woodies, with a few Mallards and about 10 Am. Wigeon, about 6 Bald Eagles, 2 N. Harriers, several Red-tails, with plenty of Turkey and Black Vultures. Several Great Egrets and GBHs sailed by, too. Oddly enough, we didn't see a single duck on the water (unless you count PB Grebes as "ducks" ...). The lower fields were flooded as were the roads in places, so we didn't explore much down there.

Looking across the Knap of Reeds Creek arm of the lake, we saw about 15 Great Egrets sitting in bushes on the opposite shore - a little late for such large numbers, especially considering how flooded the lake is. We also found a somewhat late Green Heron near the beaver pond.

The highlight bird for me was an Orange-crowned Warbler working its way through low brush- only about the third or fourth I've seen in the Triangle. Nice day!

Sightings

Late Report – Sora Dies at Culbreth

by Jeanine Zenge

On Wed., 10/22/97, I found a dead sora in the parking lot behind Culbreth Middle School here in Chapel Hill. It appears to have hit a big blank brick wall of the school. Question: why would it have been in such a place, not near any marshy habitat? Any thoughts? (I took pictures, partly to convince myself that this really happened.)

[sorry for the delay in publication - CWC]



Nov. 11-?: *Selasphorus* Hummer in Chapel Hill

by Tom Driscoll

My wife and I were home on Veterans Day and I was looking at a Red-breasted Nuthatch at the feeder when I noticed a little bird buzz by. We finally saw it well, coloration and tail pattern, about 15 minutes later and believe it is a female Rufous Hummingbird. Since we leave for week early and get home at dark, we don't know how long the bird has been here; it may just be passing through.

We have lots of Pineapple Sage, Mexican Sage, and other Salvias blooming. We've left our hummingbird feeders up, but have not changed the water in weeks, so we are cleaning a feeder and will have it up soon.

Birders are welcome to look for it, no need to call. We live at the corner of S. Lakeshore Dr and Rolling Rd in Chapel Hill; 1816 S. Lakeshore Dr., about one

block east of the corner of Curtis, S. Lakeshore, N. Lakeshore, and Kensington. Park along the street, walk up the driveway, and look at the blooming plants. We have also noted that it perches in the juniper tree next to the blooming plants.

Hope others get to see it.

Update on Nov. 15:

I saw the hummingbird this morning at 6:50am. It has been seen every day since last Thursday; about 25 others have seen it as well. Although it is still feeding on the Salvias, it is now feeding on the hummingbird feeder in the front yard more often. It seems to be feeding at about 1 hour intervals and is hard to find between feedings, although it sometimes perches in the open between feedings. It seems to be easier to see in the mornings, although that may change when it freezes.

Anyway, if you want to come see it. Walk up on the front porch and look for it at the feeder, the blooming plants, or in the juniper tree.

Sightings in Brief – What a Great Fall!

Great Egret (15), 10/23/99, Brickhouse Rd., Granville Co., CHBC
 Little Blue Heron (1), 7/5/99, Little Creek Impoundment, Durham Co., Cynthia Fox
 Black-crowned Night-Heron (5), 9/12/99, Northeast Creek (751 bridge area), Jordan Lake, Ginger Travis, Judy Murray
 Lesser Scaup (1), 10/31/99, Quail Roost, Durham Co., Tom & Janet Krakauer
 Ring-necked Duck (4), 10/25/99, 1010 pond, Wake Co., Steve & Tracy Shultz
 Bufflehead (1), 11/7/99, Rolling View, Falls Lake, Durham Co., Josh Rose
 Ruddy Duck (26), 10/23/99, Harris Lake Co. Park, Wake Co., Karen & Joe Bearden
 Broad-winged Hawk (1), 10/9/99, Orange Co., Janine Perlman
Red-necked Phalarope (1), 8/11/99, New Hope Creek mudflats, Jordan Lake, Doug Shadwick
 Semipalmated Sandpiper (8), Least Sandpipers (5), Spotted (3), University Lake, Orange Co., Ginger Travis
 Dunlin (1), Least Sandpiper (1), 10/16/99, Cane Creek Res., Orange Co., Doug Shadwick et al.
 Bonaparte's Gull (30), 11/7/99, Rolling View, Falls Lake, Durham Co., Josh Rose
 Forster's Tern (1), 10/30/99, Ebenezer Point, Jordan Lake, Doug Shadwick, Josh Rose, Norm Budnitz
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1), 10/24/99, Mason Farm, David & Judy Smith
 Red-breasted Nuthatch (2), 10/2/99, Chatham Co., Kate Finlayson
 Barn Swallow (2) (very late), with about 12 Tree Swallows, 10/16/99, Cane Creek Res., Orange Co., Doug Shadwick et al.
 Fish Crow (4), 10/23/99, Brickhouse Rd., Durham Co., CHBC. Latest Fall report.
 Winter Wren (4), 10/14/99, Duke Forest, Durham Co., Will Cook
 Gray-cheeked Thrush (1), along with Swainson's (1) and Wood (1), 10/4-9/99, Chatham Co., Shelley Theye
 Gray-cheeked Thrush (1), 10/6/99, Orange Co., Ginger Travis
 Gray-cheeked Thrush (2), 10/17/99, Orange Co., Ginger Travis
Orange-crowned Warbler (2), Prairie Warbler (1), Scarlet Tanager (1), Rose-breasted Grosbeak (1), White-throated Sparrow (6), 10/12/99, Duke Forest, Durham Co., Jeff Pippen. Latest ever Prairie report!
Orange-crowned Warbler (1), 10/23/99, Brickhouse Rd., Durham Co., CHBC
 Nashville Warbler (1), 10/3/99, Orange Co., Randy Emmitt
 Magnolia Warbler (1), Chestnut-sided Warbler (1), Black-throated Green Warbler (1), 8/22/99, Orange Co., Ginger Travis
 Cape May Warbler (1), 10/23/99, Mason Farm, Alan Johnston et al.
 Black-throated Blue Warbler (1), 10/25/99, Chapel Hill, Lucretia Kinney
Lincoln's Sparrow (1), **Vesper Sparrow** (1), Purple Finch (2), 10/25/99, Mason Farm, Jim Bloor.
 Fox Sparrow (1), 11/9/99, Duke Gardens, Jim Bloor
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak (3), 10/10/99, Chapel Hill, Francesca Perez
 Pine Siskin (3), 10/24/99, Orange Co., Barb Brooks
 Pine Siskin (2), 10/28/99, Chatham Co., Shelley Theye
 Pine Siskin (5), 11/12/99, Durham, Josh Rose
 Purple Finch (3 fem.), 9/17/99, Orange Co., Randy Dunson. Earliest on record!

Club officers

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