

We inspire and support people and organizations in our local communities to value and appreciate nature and to protect and conserve habitats for wildlife.

2021 Annual Report



The mission of New Hope Audubon Society is to promote the conservation and enjoyment of birds, other wildlife, and ecosystems, focusing on Chatham, Durham, Orange and parts of surrounding counties.

Note of Gratitude

I continue to be amazed at the time and effort that our volunteers give for this organization. The pandemic was a constant concern, but our wonderful volunteers continued to provide excellent programming, outings and advocating for birds. We have expanded our reach to new communities and as a Board we are committed to making decisions through an equity lens. We continue to grow our signature programs and initiated a multi-county Leave Your Leaves program.

We are thankful for our generous members, conservation advocates, garden clubs, corporations and foundations who support and partner with New Hope Audubon Society. The passion of our volunteers go a long way, but we need funding to bring our goals, objectives, and activities to life. I hope all our donors feel connected to the work we are doing across our local communities - positively impacting our environment. We are excited to end the year and look forward to building on our momentum in 2022.

Sincerely,

Barbara Driscoll

President, NHAS



Conservation

New Hope Audubon Society supports a variety of conservation goals, objectives and activities in our local communities. Our work involves Advocacy, Bird Friendly Habitats, Community Science and many other conservation focused projects and campaigns working to make a difference in our communities.

Swift Night Out - Chimney Swifts need our assistance. We have been working with Audubon NC on a Swift Night for several years. In 2021 our event was covered via Zoom and Facebook live with over 400 participants. Our volunteers continued counting Chimney Swifts at several locations in Chapel Hill and initiated counts at two locations in Durham. Volunteers attended a meeting centered on the UNC redevelopment of the Cosmic Cantina Swift location and provided comments on Swifts to UNC Vice Chancellor for planning purposes.

Nest Boxes - Conservation is at the heart of our nest box sales. Nest boxes provide cavities for cavity-nesting birds whose populations have decreased due to habitat loss. Almost 400 nest boxes were sold in 2021.

Riparian Habitat - Together with a huge group of Chapel Hill citizens, we were able to persuade the town of Chapel Hill not to build six storage basins which would have destroyed 55 acres of riparian habitat. The Town of Chapel Hill formed a task force to evaluate green infrastructure options that included community input.

Eagle Watch Platform – NHAS has spent many hours enjoying as well as repairing and maintaining the Jordan Lake Eagle platform over the years. Unfortunately, this year's activity was the hardest as we made the difficult decision to tear down the platform due to structural damage and safety concerns due to rising lake levels. We still lead outings and encourage birding from the shoreline from this and other Bald Eagle viewing sites at Jordan Lake.

North Carolina Botanical Gardens – We pledged our support to an important acquisition working to secure 24.7 acres to increase the footprint of a local preserve.



Advocacy

New Hope Audubon Society volunteers are working to build public support for conservation, native habitats, equity, diversity and inclusion while educating about the benefits of conservation. The issues are complex and multifaceted. Our work includes educating citizens, city and county government elected officials, and working with state government officials. We participate broadly with Audubon NC and National Audubon to address areas of concern and help to build their programs. We are excited to see the growth of our advocacy efforts in 2022!

- We built our “Advocacy Committee” as many voices are needed to create change.
- Volunteers met in February on Advocacy Day with our state legislators.
- Visited with Representative Verla Insko in March while advocating for the Heirs Property Act.
- Visited with Congressman David Price in August and centered the conversation around conservation, including the Migratory Bird Protection Act, and Recovering America’s Wildlife Act. Representative Price signed onto the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act.
- Senator Mike Woodard engaged with our volunteers in September at a bird outing at Sandy Creek Park. NHAS is grateful for the efforts of Senator Woodard as he helped create Sandy Creek Park.
- Our volunteers worked with Audubon NC to get the clean energy bill passed at the State level. Our activities including NHAS sending out multiple action alerts to our 1600 members. We had great response and worked texting to get people to sign a petition for clean energy legislation. We are proud that volunteer Ashley Robbins sent more texts than anyone in the state, 8000! Several advocacy members helped deliver the petitions to the Capitol.
- Additional national level impact happened when our volunteers were guest speakers at National Audubon’s “Find Your Flock” webinar focusing on recruiting diverse volunteers.
- NHAS members participated in National Audubon’s Bird-Friendly Panel on Proclamations, Resolutions, and Ordinances.
- NHAS members participated in National Audubon’s meeting with Pasadena Audubon on passing landscape manual and ordinances.
- Southern Environmental Law Center - Signed onto comment letters from for 1) Rollback of Migratory Bird Treaty Act and 2) Incidental takings under Migratory Bird Treaty Act.





Bird Friendly Habitat

The work of our volunteers is changing the landscape in our local communities.

Bird Friendly Certification

impacted **314** acres in 2021. Our unique certification program allows homeowners to request a bird friendly evaluation of their property. This assessment documents how well the property supports birds and wildlife. Many factors go into the assessment including evaluating the percentage of non-native invasive plants and trees on the property. Volunteers provide great tips and ways to eliminate invasive plants and suggest bird friendly native plantings to replace the invasive plants. Our volunteers completed 70 bird-friendly residential visits including several revisits.



Bird Friendly Habitat

Decomposing leaves are part of a healthy ecosystem. They support habitat for birds, bees, fireflies, and other wildlife. Leaving leaves where they fall also saves time and money. Learn more about how fallen leaves benefit our local environment and take the pledge at [LeaveYourLeaves.org](https://www.leaveyourleaves.org).

In 2021 we implemented a **Leave Your Leaves** public education campaign in Durham and increased the reach of the Chapel Hill campaign. The Leave Your Leaves campaign is helping to increase biodiversity and climate resiliency. Educating residents about the environmental and economic benefits of leaving your leaves was at the heart of our campaign. Our Leave Your Leaves activities helped residents of all ages understand how their efforts of leaving their leaves increases climate resiliency on a local level, one yard at a time. Educational materials were developed, including yard signs, and educational toolkits for elementary, middle and high school students.

The Durham campaign is made possible by a Sustainable Communities: Environmental Resilience 2021 \$15,000 grant by Triangle Community Foundation.



Bird Friendly Habitat

- **Bird-Friendly Community** – Continue our pilot project with the Durham city and county and passed two Bird-Friendly Resolutions one for city and one for county. Developed a 1–3-year action plan for implementing various parts. Developed best management practices for lighting, native plants, invasive plants, bird-safe buildings and open space requirements.
- **Meridian Corporation** – Continued working with them on their Bird-Friendly Corporate Designation.
- **Booker Creek** – Continued our work promoting removal of invasive plants and planting native. Planted over 200 trees and shrubs this year. To date this project has generated over 4000 volunteer hours with around 450 volunteers including students from the Chinese School, The East Chapel Hill Rotary Club, The LDS Church Youth Group, The Y Leadership Club, and many neighbors around the Booker Creek Trail.
- **Keep Durham Beautiful** - Partnership on a Burt's Bees Grant which will develop alternatives to turf at Durham Public Schools and a native plant landscape manual. Also partnered with our Leave Your Leaves campaign.
- **Designing workshops with several Landscape Architects** on a 3-part continuing education program for landscape architects. Objectives include: 1) Why native plants, 2) How to design with native plants and 3) Maintenance of native plants. The courses have been approved by NC Board of Landscape Architects.
- **PeeWee Homes** – Partnership providing \$2,000. support to plant native plantings at their low-income properties.
- **St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Chapel Hill** – Partnership to design and install a pollinator garden.
- **WCHL** – Partnership to ensure that buffer areas in a field where their antennas are located were not mowed but left for pollinators and birds. Signage was created and posted to tell the public why mowing was less in some areas.



Community Science

Christmas Bird Counts 2021 - Volunteers donated 815 hours to counting birds at Jordan Lake, Chapel Hill and Durham.

Collision Window Survey - Concern for bird window collisions led this team to implement a study of five buildings on the UNC Chapel Hill campus. An Ecostudies Intern was secured to work on this project. The data was evaluated and a plan to address the collisions on campus has been developed. Talks have begun with the UNC Sustainability Group to discuss ways to address this issue and promote bird-safe buildings. This project engaged 17 volunteers for monitoring and evaluating the data. We look forward to growing this project.

Jordan Lake Bird Counts - Created a new web page that lets people explore bird count data, creating graphs for birds seen during the past four decades. The Spring Bird Count involved 60 volunteers and 136 hours counting birds.

National Audubon Society's Climate Watch Program - We had 10 people count in 9 squares for the winter count, and 11 people count in 10 squares for the spring count.

South Ellerbe Creek Restoration Project - Continued monthly bird counts at this important area in Durham that is being converting into a restored wetland. Data collection will allow comparisons for bird species once project is completed. Volunteers Tom Driscoll and Norm Budnitz received kudos from Durham Storm-water Department for helping with this project. The restoration project has been delayed due to COVID.

Great Backyard Bird Count - Partnered with the Triangle Land Conservancy on Great Backyard Bird Count.

Mini-breeding Bird Survey – NHAS coordinated 18 volunteers in 13 parties to conduct 22 survey routes in Durham, Orange, and Chatham counties for a total of 88 volunteer hours.



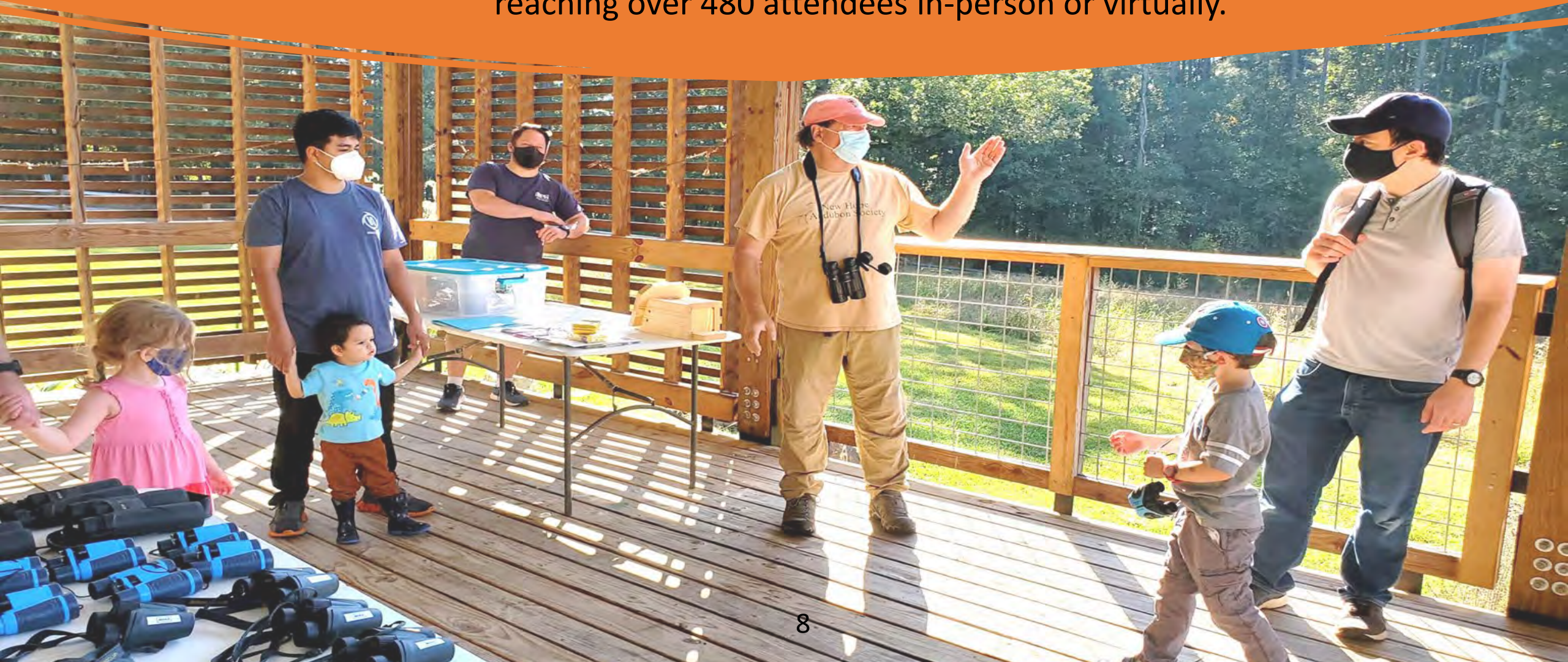
Nest Boxes

Conservation is at the heart of our nest box sales and it's a bonus that sales support NHAS as a fundraiser. Nest boxes provide cavities for cavity-nesting birds whose populations have decreased due to habitat loss. Almost 400 nest boxes were sold in 2021! Educational nest box building sessions were a big hit in 2021 with five sessions accommodating approximately 60 students.



Education

Bird-friendly Presentations engaged 18 groups in our region, reaching over 480 attendees in-person or virtually.





Education Programs

Chapel Hill Library - We partnered with the library to build an accessible bird blind, and organized Project Feeder Watch events.

North Carolina Botanical Garden Partnerships:

- Birding 101 Class – Our volunteers worked with 20 students for three classes to learn about birds and habitats. The classes included several field trips.
- Co-sponsored a talk by Lauren Pharr, Ornithologist, “Analyzing the Effects of Urban Noise and Light Pollution on Avian Communities” in February.
- Hummingbirds, Susan Campbell virtual presentation in August.

How are the Barn Swallow Chicks Doing, Murry Burgess - Co-sponsored an event with Capital Headwaters Group of the Sierra Club. Murry Burgess is a wildlife biologist at NCSU. She is a member of NC State’s Public Science Cluster – a group dedicated to making science more accessible and understandable.

Woodland Birds of Brumley North

More than 150 bird species have been reported in the Brumley North Preserve. If you are a new bird-watcher, consider using free apps like *Merlin Bird ID* by Cornell Lab or *Audubon Bird Guide*.

To identify birds, look for these characteristics:

- What are the bird’s main colors?
- How does the size and shape compare to familiar birds like sparrows, robins or crows?
- Where do you see the bird: on the ground, the middle of trees, the tops of trees, or flying?
- What types of sounds is the bird making: chirps, trills, loud calls?

How many of these birds can you identify?

Living Here Year-Round

Winter Residents				Summer Residents			

NEW HOPE AUDUBON A local chapter of the National Audubon Society, our mission is to promote the conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

TRIANGLE LAND CONSERVANCY Donate to T.L.C. today to help double the pace of conservation in the Triangle.

Bird Identification Signage – Developed educational signs and partnered with Triangle Land Conservancy to place the signs in areas where school and summer camp children meet daily. The signage helps teachers and counselors engage the students about what they are seeing and hearing on the sites.

Education Programs

BLOGS

NHAS Directors and members share their insights throughout the year.



Trees Are for the Birds - Barb explores the role native trees play in the survival of our birds and the many other benefits of trees. – by Barb Stenross

Evening Grosbeaks in a Winter of North Carolina Finches - It was during my teenage years when I first met Evening Grosbeaks. I had been birding for 4 or 5 years, and I had finally convinced my parents that we should put up a bird feeder in the front yard near our old gray birch tree. – by Norm Budnitz

Plant for Specialist Bees - Bees, our most important pollinator, are either generalists or specialists. Roughly a third of our bees are specialists. – by Lynn Richardson

A Florida and Georgia Trip Report - In March 2021, Vern Bothwell asked if I wanted to go on a birding trip, maybe to Florida; my immediate response was “I’m in.” Gail Boyarsky and Clarke French also joined us. We wanted to see a few specific birds and look for lifers, but we also wanted to see new places and start our post-pandemic lives. – by Tom Driscoll

Noticing the Little Things in the Summer Garden - David explores Jim’s native plant garden with him and photographs many interesting little things. – by Jim George and David George

Bird Friendly Yards: Deanna’s Story - Barb tells the story of one of the homeowners that she and Sally Heiney visited this summer as part of the New Hope Audubon Bird Friendly Yard Certification Program. -by Barb Stenross

New Committee Aims to Make Birding Accessible to More People. Like so many others, Lynn Shapiro first discovered the joy of backyard birding when COVID-19 hit. She put up feeders and a bluebird box in her yard and began to learn the names and habits of the species that came to visit... - by Jessica Belsky

Education Programs



Monthly Meetings

Our monthly meetings, September – May, highlight birds and wildlife on various levels. It's a great opportunity to connect with members and hear from great presenters. 2021 presentations included:

Calhoun Bond, Jr, "The Oldest Bird: What we can learn from two fossils (Anchisaurus and Archaeopteryx)"

Bo Howes, "The Importance of Conservation Land for Our Feathered Friends"

Matt Jones, "Tree Identification – How birds use trees (especially during migration), and what tree would be good for our yards"

Jeff Pippen, "Monitoring Butterflies for Change: NC and across the Continent"

Andrew Hutson, "Protecting Birds and the Places They Need"

Olya Milenkaya, "Shimmy, Shine, Shout: How Birds Get Their Message Across"

Johnny Randall, "Natural History of the Morgan Creek Valley"

Stephen Hall, "NC Biodiversity Project"



Get Outdoors

NHAS welcomed three new volunteers into the flock of “Trip Leaders” in 2021. The bird outings invite all levels of birders from beginners, to seasoned birders to participate. Look for bird outings on our website calendar.



Hawk Watch Weekend
at Mahogany Rock
was a success!

Local bird outings were impacted due to the pandemic in the first half of 2021. NHAS decided to formally restart walks in the latter part of June. Volunteer trip leaders completed 35 - 40 outings, with over 105 volunteer hours in six months.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Our work is often centered on building awareness, while working to build relationships. We are working to build awareness of what inequity looks and feels like in our communities, and at the same we are building and implementing conservation programs in under resourced areas.



Committed volunteers are working for NHAS to look like the communities we represent.

- **Birdability “Blitz”** – Implemented surveying our local birding sites and city parks to gather information as to the accessibility and safety of those sites. This project helps to build awareness of sites that are easily accessible and safe for birding outings.
- **Durham City Parks Active Together Dads and Kids Program** - Partnered to bring birding lessons to members of the program.
- **North Carolina Central University** - Two students hired as “Leave Your Leaves Ambassadors”. Collaborated with North Carolina Central University’s undergraduate environmental health class and Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association to provide bird outings at Beaver Marsh and Glennstone Preserves in Durham.
- **Merrick-Moore Community** – Provided support for their grant application to preserve green space and to decrease risk of gentrification.
- **American Indian Center Symposium** - Volunteers represented NHAS at the NC Botanical Garden event.
- **Durham Environmental Coalition and Diversity & Equity in Environmental Organizations** – Partnership to provide environmental justice training to over 200 people and three follow up workshops on Race and the Environment for 100.
- **Urban Economic AgriNomics (UCAN)** – UCAN provides food for lower-income communities and teaches people how to grow their own food. Our partnership and mentoring has built their environmental programming to include leading bird outings on their property. Activities included engaging children in K-8 grades with birding lessons and a bird nest box building event at the Catawba Trail Farm. Birding 101 and Bioblitz events were held at East End Park in partnership with UCAN, helping to build our work in under resourced communities. A 2021 Audubon in Action Grant helped support our work with UCAN.

2021 Annual Report

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Media and Communications – growing our reach!

2021 Audubon NC grant for Clean Energy communications

Facebook has 1120 followers and Facebook Group has 1040 members

Mailchimp has 2,046 recipients currently on mailing list and we added 386 people in 2021

Meetup: Tripled members with 165 in 2021 vs. 65 in 2020

Join our Flock!

**This report highlights our work for the 2021 calendar year, financials are located on our website under Donate.*

New Hope Audubon Society is committed to conservation, education and the beauty of bird watching with others to help build a better planet.



**All photographs are supplied by NHAS members.*