

# New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter



Volume 32, Number 3: May-June 2006

## Special May Field Trips Dianne Byrne, Field Trip Chair

We have three especially exciting field trips scheduled for May, and I'd like to tell you a little about each one. I hope to whet your appetite so you will decide to join us.

In response to an email request, New Hope Audubon Society is sponsoring a very special Kids Bird Walk in May. Last month, I received an email from one of our members asking whether children are welcome on our bird walks and whether we would be willing to provide a bird walk just for kids. I thought a bird walk for kids was an excellent idea, and so did our board members. Tom Driscoll, our Programs Chair, and Kate Finlayson, our Education Chair, immediately volunteered to lead such a walk. Children are always welcome to come on our field trips, but our May 7 bird walk will be designed specifically for them. All ages are welcome to come along, and first-time birders as well as experienced birders will enjoy the trip. Tom Driscoll will lead this first trip, and he will try especially hard to make sure that each child has a chance to see and hear the birds he will point out. We also have a video with photos and songs of 15 local birds that will be played in conjunction with the bird walk. The walk will take place at Mason Farm, which has level walking trails and always has numerous bird species. See the Calendar for details on carpooling. Adults are also welcome, but the pace and bird descriptions will be directed towards children. This promises to be a fun event!

Mr. Jeff Hall, from Weyerhaeuser's Cool Springs Environmental Education Center, spoke at our January 2006 general membership meeting. He showed photographs of Eastern NC reptiles and amphibians and provided information about the Cool Springs facility. He also invited HNAS members to visit

the Cool Springs facility to see some of their resident or migrating bird species as well as amphibians and reptiles. The center has 1700 acres of forest land, including walking trails and a 700 foot boardwalk that loops through swamp land. Over 100 bird species have been seen there, including Prothonotary and Yellow-throated warblers, Swainson's and Hooded warblers, and Acadian flycatchers to name a few. On May 13, the facility is having its annual Birding Bonanza to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day, and Jeff has invited our members to join the fun. We will be able to see rescued birds and do our own birding on the property. The facility is located near Askin, NC (between Vanceboro and New Bern). We will plan car pools for as many participants as possible. Please notify Dianne Byrne at least one week in advance (by May 6) if you plan to go on this field trip.

In November, 2005 we visited the Duke University Primate Center in Durham for a very enjoyable guided tour. Please see the Jan/Feb 2006 newsletter for a description of that trip. We saw many beautiful lemurs in their indoor winter habitat, and participants asked for a return trip in the summer when the animals will be outdoors. As part of our tour last November, we saw a video of lemurs jumping over 20 feet from tree to tree, and we are hoping to witness this behavior in May when the lemurs will be free-ranging (behind fences of course!). Pre-registration by May 22 is required so the primate center staff will know how many tour guides to provide for us. The tour date is May 27, beginning at 10:30 am. There is a fee of \$4 per person for the tour. See the Calendar for address and visit the center's website for a preview of the animals you can expect to see ([www.primatecenter.duke.edu](http://www.primatecenter.duke.edu)).

## PROPOSED SLATE OF 2006-07 OFFICERS

The Nominating Committee has proposed the following slate of officers for 2006-2007. The election of officers will take place at the May 4, membership meeting. If you have any additions to these nominations please contact the NHAS before the meeting.

President . . . . . Marsha Stephens  
Vice President . . . . . Robin Moran  
Secretary . . . . . Pat Reid  
Treasurer . . . . . Karsten Rist

Director . . . . . Martha Girolami  
Director . . . . . Philip Johnson  
Director . . . . . Stewart Pearce

# WILDATHON 2006

The 2006 New Hope Audubon Society Wildathon, our annual fund raising activity, begins in mid-April and runs through May 15th and we NEED you to participate! We need your support to continue the nature advocacy and environmental work we do for Chatham, Durham, and Orange Counties. There are 3 ways to participate:

- 1. Make a financial contribution.** Contributing is one of the best ways to protect important bird and wildlife habitat here in Chapel Hill (Mason Farm) and at the Coast (Audubon Coast Islands Sanctuary).
- 2. Lead a team and/or join a team.** The Wildathon is a day in April or May where teams go out to identify and, more importantly, count bird, plant, reptile and amphibian, insect, and/or other species. Usually, donations are based on the number of species counted. Start your own team or contact me if you would like to be on a team. You do not have to be experienced to be on a team.
- 3. Help bring in donations.** Beyond making a donation yourself, participants can help raise money by soliciting donations on behalf of their team.

Your contribution is **tax deductible** and your participation will be **noted in our bi-monthly newsletter and on our website ([www.newhopeaudubon.org](http://www.newhopeaudubon.org))**. If you want a contribution or participation form, then check our website and look for the last newsletter or contact me. If you have any questions or would like to discuss your participation further, then please contact Tom Driscoll at (919) 932-7966 or [btdriscoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:btdriscoll@bellsouth.net). Any contribution is greatly appreciated!

## A Triangle Naturalist's Almanac

Patrick Coin

### Think Skink!



During summer walks through Triangle woodlands, I always keep an ear tuned to the distinctive rustling of skinks in the leaf litter. These are likely our most abundant lizards, and we have three species in the area. They are active during the day, but keep mostly under cover, especially when humans approach. Pausing calmly and watching may allow one to observe behavior of these pretty little lizards.

The skinks, family Scincidae, are the largest family of lizards, with over 1,000 species worldwide, but we have just five species in North Carolina, and only four potentially occur in the Triangle. As a group, our skinks are distinctively shiny. This is due to their smooth scales, each reinforced with a bony plate called an osteoderm. The shininess readily differentiates local skinks from other lizards, such as the Fence Swift and the Six-lined Racerunner. However skinks are sometimes mistaken for salamanders, which are completely unrelated amphibians.

Most likely to be seen in our area is the Five-lined Skink, *Eumeces fasciatus*. The petite juveniles are the familiar "blue-

tailed skinks". The blue tail disappears with maturity. Adult females are brownish-black with the five light stripes. Adult males lose their striping, becoming almost pure coppery brown with a reddish-orange head. Adults are medium-sized, five to eight inches, including the long tail that breaks off easily if grasped by a predator. The Broad-headed Skink, *Eumeces laticeps*, resembles the Five-lined, but grows much larger, up to twelve inches. Adult males are imposing, with bright red heads and swollen jowls. These Skinks are more arboreal than Five-lined, often taking to trees to escape an intruder. The Broad-headed is uncommon in the Triangle, but I have seen the males, distinctive by their size and swollen heads, a few times in the area. Females are hard to differentiate in the field from the more common Five-lined. Even more maddening is the Southeastern Five-lined Skink, *Eumeces inexpectatus* – it can be differentiated from the Five-lined only by the pattern of scales under the tail. It is common in the coastal plain, but does range up into the Piedmont, preferring dry woodlands. While the Broad-headed Skink is our largest true lizard, the related Ground Skink, *Scincella lateralis*, is our smallest, at three to five inches, tail included. It is more often heard than seen as it scurries beneath leaf litter in woodlands. I have only succeeded in photographing it after capture, as shown here.

Look for skinks in extensive woodlands and along their edges. Eno River State Park is a good area – Ground Skinks are everywhere in summer, and five-lined skinks are frequently sighted racing up and around tree trunks. For more information on skinks, see: Martof, *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia*; Tynning, *A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles*; Braswell, *Reptiles of North Carolina*; and Beane, *Love Skinks, Wildlife in North Carolina, April, 2006*. The last article appeared just as this one was going to press, and is a delightful read.

## Mini Breeding Bird Survey

The Mini Breeding Bird Survey (MBBS) is a joint project with Chapel Hill Bird Club, New Hope Audubon and interested birders in our area which began in 1999. These surveys are a small scale version of the North American Breeding Bird Survey. The routes were originally selected for Orange County, but expanded to Chatham County in 2000 and Durham County in 2002, due to great interest. Haven Wiley, Professor of Biology and Ecology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, supervised and initially trained participants. The routes are randomly selected and there are 12 routes in Orange, 14 routes in Chatham, and 8 routes in Durham. Each route is run on an annual basis from May 15 through June 30 in order to count breeding birds both seen and heard. The goal is to document year-to-year changes in the distribution and numbers of birds, and to track habitat changes at each stop. Please refer to: <http://www.unc.edu/~rhwiley/mbbs/> for more information on procedures and results. If you are interested in participating you may contact:

**Orange County Coordinator:** Ginger Travis (942-7746)

**Chatham County Coordinator:** Marsha Stephens (732-4014)

**Durham County Coordinator:** Patsy Bailey (933-5850)

## Upcoming New Hope Audubon Society Membership Meeting

On May 4, Loren Hintz will discuss the "Flora and Fauna of El Salvador." Loren should have some great pictures and discussion of his trip there. Loren is a biology teacher at Chapel Hill High School.

I am setting up speakers for our next season. If you have a good nature or environmental presentation, or know of a good speaker or a topic that you would like to hear, then contact me at [btdriscoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:btdriscoll@bellsouth.net).

As always, our membership meetings are held at the Totten Center at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens. The gardens are on Hwy. 15-501 at the intersection of Old Mason Farm Road. The meeting starts at 7pm with refreshments, chatting with friends, and meeting visitors or new members. There is chapter business at 7:20 or so and the presentations start at approximately 7:45 and run through 9:00. Everyone, even non-members, is welcome! See you on May 4th! Remember there are no membership meetings in June, July, and August.

## Feeder Watch

**Tom Driscoll**



Feeder Watch reports on birds you could be seeing at the bird feeders and/or in your back yard. If you have ideas about what to write, want to report on the birds you are seeing, or have questions about the birds you are seeing, please send me an email at [btdriscoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:btdriscoll@bellsouth.net).

You should be receiving this newsletter in mid-April. Flowers

and trees are blooming and budding out. Our winter visitors, like the juncos and the White-throated Sparrows, will be leaving and our summer visitors will be arriving. Many of the birds that are arriving, such as warblers and thrushes, are not feeder birds, but you will hear them. Can you recognize birds? If you watch and listen, you should hear cardinals, chickadees, and titmice. They have common calls and if you recognize them, then you will know when our migrants arrive. One of our migrants is the tiny Blue-gray Gnatcatchers with a buzzy, insect-like call.

Our hummingbirds will be arriving soon or have arrived. Get out your feeders, clean them, and prepare your sugar water. Remember, four parts water to one part sugar. During April, our resident birds will be nesting (as I write this article, we have House Finches and Eastern Bluebirds with eggs) and they may be eating less food. As their eggs hatch and the chicks fledge however, they will be visiting your feeders more often. Have you seen orioles (orange and black) or tanagers (red like cardinals, but without a crest)? If so, then putting out pieces of oranges may attract these birds. If you are not sure what birds you are seeing, email me with descriptions or, even better, buy a bird guide and learn to identify your feeder birds.

Make sure your bluebird boxes are up. The bluebirds will nest two or three times each season, so if you would like to purchase a bluebird house contact me. The New Hope Audubon Society sells them for \$15. Free delivery! Note that other birds, such as titmice and chickadees, will use these boxes as well.

I challenge you to learn the names and calls of your feeder birds! Please let me know if you do. If you have questions or notice an unusual bird, then please contact me. See you at the next membership meeting or read this column in the August-September-October newsletter!

**ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY • SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2006 • 8:30 A.M.**

*Interested folks should call Phil Johnson to confirm.*

# New Hope Audubon Society Activities Calendar

DATE/TIME	ACTIVITY	CONTACT
Saturday, April 22 8:00 a.m.	<b>Bird Walk, Local Birding Spot</b> We will meet at the Wild Bird Center at Eastgate Shopping Center at 7:55 a.m. <b>Notes:</b> All levels welcome.	<b>Trip Leader:</b> Cynthia Fox
Saturday, April 29 9:00 a.m.	<b>Stream Watch</b>	<b>Trip Leader:</b> John Kent 933-5650 or jkent@tmug.org
Thursday, May 4 7:30 p.m.	<b>Membership Meeting</b> Loren Hintz will discuss the "Flora and Fauna of El Salvador" Totten Center at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens	
Saturday, May 6 8:00 a.m.	<b>Bird Walk, Local Birding Spot</b> We will meet at the Wild Bird Center at Eastgate Shopping Center at 7:55 a.m. <b>Notes:</b> All levels welcome.	<b>Trip Leader:</b> Cynthia Fox
Sunday, May 7 1:00 p.m.	<b>"Especially for Kids" Bird Walk</b> <b>Destination:</b> Mason Farm; <b>Meeting Places:</b> Trip leader will meet participants at the parking lot in front of Mardi Gras bowling lanes (at the intersection of NC 54 and Farrington Rd.) and then drive to the parking lot of the NC Botanical Gardens to meet additional participants. From the NCBG, we will drive the short distance to Mason Farm. <b>Note:</b> This walk is designed for kids of all ages and all levels of birding. We will also watch a short video of local birds and bird calls in the Totten Center. Trip time, including carpooling and video, will be approximately 1:00-3:30 p.m.	<b>Trip Leader:</b> Tom Driscoll
Saturday, May 13	<b>"Birding Bonanza" at Weyerhaeuser's Cool Springs Environmental Education Center near New Bern, NC</b> Jeff Hall (our Jan. 5 speaker on reptiles and amphibians) from Cool Springs Environmental Education Center has invited NHAS members to attend the Center's annual Birding Bonanza in celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. If interested, call Dianne Byrne by May 6 to register and to obtain carpooling information.	
Saturday, May 20 8:00 a.m.	<b>Bird Walk, Duke Gardens, Durham</b> <b>Meeting Place:</b> parking lot near Duke Gardens Visitor Center at 7:55 a.m. <b>Notes:</b> All levels welcome.	<b>Trip Leader:</b> Cynthia Fox
Saturday, May 27 10:30-11:30 a.m.	<b>Guided Tour of Duke Primate Center</b> See the lemurs outdoors in their summer habitat. Members loved this trip last November and asked to return in the summer when the lemurs are outside. Please notify Dianne Byrne by May 22 if you plan to join us. Cost is \$4 per person. Center is located on Lemur Lane, off Erwin Rd. near intersection with NC 751	
Saturday, June 3 8:00 a.m.	<b>Bird Walk, Local Birding Spot</b> We will meet at the Wild Bird Center at Eastgate Shopping Center at 7:55 a.m. <b>Notes:</b> All levels welcome.	<b>Trip Leader:</b> Cynthia Fox

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## New Hope Audubon Society Activities Calendar continued

DATE/TIME	ACTIVITY	CONTACT
Saturday, June 3 9:00 a.m.	Stream Watch	Trip Leader: John Kent 933-5650 or jkent@tmug.org
Saturday, June 24 8:00 a.m.	Bird Walk, Local Birding Spot We will meet at the Wild Bird Center at Eastgate Shopping Center at 7:55 a.m. <b>Notes:</b> All levels welcome.	Trip Leader: Cynthia Fox
Saturday, July 9	Eagle Count	Trip Leader: Stewart Pearce 942-7660 or spearce@yankleovich.com
Saturday, July 15 8:00 a.m.	Bird Walk, Local Birding Spot We will meet at the Wild Bird Center at Eastgate Shopping Center at 7:55 a.m. <b>Notes:</b> All levels welcome.	Trip Leader: Cynthia Fox
Saturday, July 29 8:00 a.m.	Bird Walk, Local Birding Spot We will meet at the Wild Bird Center at Eastgate Shopping Center at 7:55 a.m. <b>Notes:</b> All levels welcome.	Trip Leader: Cynthia Fox

**General Note for Field Trips: Occasionally we need to change the departure time, destination, or date of a field trip. Please notify trip leader or field trip chair at least one day before the walk if you plan to join us. (Tom Driscoll, (919) 932-7966; Dianne Byrne, (919) 929-8266)**

## New Hope Audubon Society Activities

Although we have a hiatus from membership meetings for the summer, every year the New Hope Audubon Society (NHAS) board meets in June and/or July to discuss plans for the upcoming "year" which is the following September through May. While discussing our priorities for the upcoming year at the planning meetings, we are always looking for new opportunities to reach out to our community. We are seeking your input.

We are already involved in advocacy for nature and the environment. Some of our activities during the past year were to provide funds for the purchase of the New Hope Creek corridor, instead of allowing it to be developed and we continued our support of Mason Farm. We also provide support for the Audubon Coastal Sanctuary near Wrightsville Beach. We also provide testimony at local town and county council meetings as advocates for various nature and environmental concerns.

We also monitor the water quality at several locations along New Hope Creek and have been for many years. We also support Christmas and spring bird counts at Jordan Lake. We also participate in Breeding Bird Surveys. These activities all provide us with trends data where we (and others) can determine where natural habitats are declining or improving.

We are also very involved in education. Our education chair (and occasionally others) visits schools to discuss nature and the environment. We also provide schools with "Audubon Adventures", a nature magazine designed to spur interest in natural history. We also lead field trips for birdwatchers and plant "watchers" (for lack of a better term). We lead field trips for scouts and other groups, as well. We clean up Stagecoach Road periodically and maintain the Eagle Platform, off of Highway 751 on Jordan Lake, and its corresponding trails.

This is only a brief description of our activities each and every year. However, we are asking you, our membership, what other activities we could and should be doing. Please let us know! You can contact me at (919) 932-7966 or [btdriscoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:btdriscoll@bellsouth.net) if you have ideas. **We would like to hear from you!** We represent and support Chatham, Durham, Orange, and parts of Alamance Counties and we want to serve you better!

# New Hope Audubon Society 2005-2006 Officers

OFFICE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS
<b>President</b>	VACANT		
<b>Vice-President</b>	Robin Moran	383-3514	robomo@earthlink.com
<b>Secretary</b>	Pat Reid	542-2433	photopr@yahoo.com
<b>Treasurer</b>	Karsten Rist	490-5718	karsten.rist@verizon.net
<b>Education Chair</b>	Kate Finlayson	545-0737	katefin@yahoo.com
<b>Conservation Chair</b>	Susan Pratt	967-0593	sepratt@email.unc.edu
<b>Field Trips Chair</b>	Dianne Byrne	929-8266	DianneByrne713@aol.com
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Pat Reid	542-2433	photopr@yahoo.com
<b>Webmaster</b>	Patrick Coin	544-3239	web@newhopeaudubon.org
<b>Stream Watch</b>	John Kent	933-5650	jkent@tmug.org
<b>Adopt-a-Highway</b>	Philip Johnson	933-0144	pjphilip@earthlink.net
<b>Eagle Count</b>	Stewart Pearce	942-7660	spearce@yankelovich.com
<b>Hospitality Chair</b>	Joanna Hiller	451-3128	hille006@mc.duke.edu
<b>Eagle Platform</b>	Judy Murray	942-2985	jmurray@unc.edu
<b>Membership Chair</b>	VACANT		
<b>Birdseed Sales Chair</b>	Judy Murray	942-2985	jmurray@unc.edu
<b>Wildathon Chair</b>	Tom Driscoll	932-7966	btdriscoll@bellsouth.net
<b>Director</b>	Philip Johnson	933-0144	pjphilip@earthlink.net
<b>Director</b>	Judy Murray	942-2985	jmurray@unc.edu
<b>Director</b>	Stewart Pearce	942-7660	spearce@yankelovich.com

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