

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter



Volume 33, Number 1: January-February 2007

Conservation Corner – Jordan Lake by Joanna Hiller

In my last article, I stated that I would like to take a closer look at places in North Carolina that tourists and local people love to visit. One of these is Jordan Lake. It is considered one of North Carolina's treasured resources – as a recreational destination, as a natural habitat for significant flora and fauna, as an important water supply for thousands of North Carolinians, as well as a place for exploding development.

The NC Division of Parks and Recreation operates eight recreation areas on the 46,768 acres lake – Crosswinds Campground, Ebenezer Church, Parkers Creek, Poplar Point Seaforth, Vista Point, Robeson Creek and New Hope Overlook. In 2004, one million people visited the lake for recreational purposes such as camping, fishing, swimming and hiking.



Jordan Lake has achieved ecological importance through fish and wildlife conservation. Quite significantly, it has become one of the largest summertime homes of the bald eagle – thanks to vast, undisturbed regions of forest for nesting and plenty of fish to eat. The population of eagles in the Jordan Lake area has increased dramatically since the flooding of the reservoir in 1983. Although protection efforts have increased its numbers, the bald eagle still remains a rare species. The eagles congregate at the north end of the lake and can be seen best from with the NC 751 Bridge crossing Northeast Creek or the Wildlife Resources Commission's Wildlife Observation Deck. The observation deck is located five miles south of I-40 on 751, six-and-one-half miles north of US 64.

Additionally, Jordan Lake provides the water supply for surrounding cities, as well as flood and water quality control. In recent years, booming housing developments are crowding the upper part of the lake – in the Cary region. Chatham County, the second fastest growing county in the state, has added to this concern. According to Environment North Carolina, rapid growth harms our lakes in two ways: "Paved surfaces serve as a conduit for oil, dirt, fertilizer, and other toxins, funneling pollution straight into our waters. Additionally, more development means more people, increasing the amount of wastewater that communities must discharge into the lake." The very lake from which we obtain our water supply, which fish and wildlife have given a refuge in, and which millions of tourists visit annually, is in peril.

Legislation has been introduced to the NC Senate to not only increase awareness of the effect of pollution to our lakes, but also to address the issue of rampant development that has had in creating this problem. We all want to see North Carolinians served in the best way possible by getting a handle on pollution, and hopefully mandating responsible growth when allowing development in treasured areas such as Jordan Lake.

NHAS Membership Meetings

We have some excellent speakers lined up for upcoming meetings. On January 4, 2007, we have Dean Kanipe presenting information on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. One will be able to hike and camp along this trail and it will go near Falls Lake. Imagine hiking from Boone to Manteo! On February 1, 2007, Carol Ann McCormick will discuss the Native Plants of the Carolinas: The Role of Herbaria in Research, Conservation, and Education. Carol leads botany field trips for the New Hope Audubon Society and is a professor at UNC. As always, our membership meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens' Totten Center. The meeting starts with refreshments and conversation at 7pm, followed by a few minutes of chapter business. The speaker usually speaks from 8 to 9pm. The Totten Center is on Highway 15-501 at Old Mason Farm Road in Chapel Hill, just south of the intersection with Highway 54. Everyone, even nonmembers, is welcome. Invite your friends!

A Triangle Naturalist's Almanac



by Patrick Coin

A Woodpecker of Distinction

The Red-bellied Woodpecker, *Melanerpes carolinus*, is a bird that needs no introduction to Triangle residents. It is the most conspicuous woodpecker of suburban woodlands in our area, and it is a frequent visitor to bird feeders in the winter. The common name of this species is not the best – the red belly is difficult to see. Most non-birders refer to this as the “red-headed woodpecker”. An old folk name, “zebra woodpecker”, is perhaps more appropriate.

At the turn of the 20th century, this bird was decidedly uncommon in the Raleigh-Durham area. T. Gilbert Pearson, writing in the first edition (1919) of *Birds of North Carolina*, stated that it was rare in the vicinity of Raleigh. In contrast, the Red-headed Woodpecker was quite common at that time, even reported to nest in the flagpole at the state capitol building. The situation is reversed today, reflecting changes in the Piedmont landscape. When Pearson wrote, most of this area was open farmland and orchards, good habitat for red-heads, but not suitable for red-bellies. Today, if undeveloped, most of those orchards and farms are grown up in dense woodlands. The red-belly prefers forests, so it is now the common woodpecker of our area. Its tastes in food are quite catholic. It is found of insect larva, of course, but especially of nuts and fruit. It loves sunflower seeds.

As a species, the red-belly is a real southeasterner, being most abundant from southern Illinois and Virginia southward, though its range has expanded northward recently. In the north it is partially migratory, but it is a permanent resident in our area. A group of related birds occupy a wide range in North America, constituting a *superspecies*. The other members of this group are the Golden-fronted and Gila Woodpeckers of the southwest, the Hoffman's Woodpecker of Central America, and the West Indian Woodpecker. Birders traveling to the Arizona, for example, will find the habits of the local Gila Woodpeckers to be very similar to those of our red-belly.

Look for Red-bellied Woodpeckers in almost any deciduous or mixed pine/deciduous forest throughout the Triangle. Suburban woodlands may be even better than natural areas for this bird. For more information about the Red-bellied Woodpecker and its relatives, see: Winkler, *Woodpeckers, an Identification Guide*; Terres, *Encyclopedia of North American Birds*; and such web sites as Cornell's *All About Birds*, the *Patuxent Bird Identification Infocenter*, and *The Animal Diversity Web*.

Audubon NC Chapter Day

Please reserve Saturday, February 3, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm for Audubon NC Chapter Day. All interested New Hope Audubon members are welcome to attend. This year's meeting will be held at the Zoo in Asheboro. There is no cost, other than you will need to get lunch from a local vendor. While it is always an informative and fun time, the current planning for the agenda is very relevant to our chapter efforts this year. Some of the offerings include: Seth Benz, Director of Hog Island, presenting on his Audubon Camp in Maine; Rob Fergus, a Senior Scientist from National Audubon, speaking about the Audubon-At-Home program; time for chapter members to discuss topics of interest- and much more! Stay tuned for more information and directions which will be posted on the website and through our list. Or you may call Marsha Stephens at 732-4014, for any questions, a copy of the finalized schedule of events, or any other topics to include in our chapter discussion which you would like to suggest.

Join Our Listserv!

New Hope Audubon has a listserv that is available through Yahoo. We will send out notifications and reminders of programs, field trips, festivals, conservation news, counts, etc. If you already have a Yahoo userid and password, you may just sign in and follow the directions in order to join the group. The link is:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/newhopeaudubon/>

If you don't have a Yahoo account you need to create a userid and password by following the directions on the screen to make these. You will receive email confirmation of your account and group membership. The suggestion to promote the list in the upcoming newsletter is great. This could really become a useful tool for communicating all field trips, programs, conservation efforts, festivals, counts, etc., including opportunities that arise at short notice.

Still Looking...

for individuals interested in working on Membership and Publicity for the chapter. We've already begun to organize contacts to disseminate our chapter activities and projects. Now we need a few volunteers to make sure we keep it going. If you like working with people and are good at organizing, please call Marsha Stephens at 732-4014.

Web Developments

You may have noticed that we're in the process of updating the NHAS website! More complete information will be accessible soon. If you have any suggestions for changes or additions, please let us know!

New Hope Audubon wishes to acknowledge a donation made in memory of MR. STEVE PORTNOW
“...a retired teacher who moved to Chapel Hill with his family. He greatly enjoyed the beautiful environment and especially the birds that came to his backyard...” By David and Sue Taylor

Bird Seed Sale Results

by Judy Murray

The birdseed sale was a successful one again this year. Many thanks to all of you who ordered seed –without you there would be no sale. As you may know all of the proceeds of this sale go to education in the form of elementary classroom instruction, part of newsletter printing costs, and the cost of street festivals where we aim to get the word out about the Audubon Society, birds and environmental issues in general. We netted \$3,517.00. I would like to thank Cynthia Fox of the Wild Bird Center who has graciously supported us with this sale for the past three years. Also many thanks to Patsy Bailey, Norm Budnitz, Tom Driscoll, Monica Nees, Pat Reid, and Marsha Stephens (forgive me if I left your name out) who helped in the delivering and loading of the seed on the day of pickup.

Feeder Watch

by Tom Driscoll

Feeder watchers, have you seen any winter visitors yet? Are you looking carefully? This article will discuss the feeder birds you may be missing. Our winter visitors have arrived and with the cold front coming through today, there may be more. I have seen several Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Hermit Thrush, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, juncos, White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and more. Have you seen these or others yet?

In the winter, most birds flock together. They do this for protection and to find food. Have you noticed that many birds

of different species come together to your bird feeder at the same time? Along with the birds that come to the feeders, there are often birds at the periphery that are in the same flock but do not eat regularly at feeders. Although not regular visitors to my backyard feeders, I have noticed Baltimore Orioles, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Pine Warblers, and other eating suet on very cold days. I have also noticed other birds hanging with the feeder birds. Yesterday, a Brown Creeper was in the flock in the back yard. Recently, a Hermit Thrush was also visiting my back yard with another flock of birds. So keep an eye out for “attendant” birds.

Also, do you look at your feeder birds carefully? For the most part, I get the same birds every day at my feeders. However, last week I noticed a Red-breasted Nuthatch at my feeder. Can you tell the difference between the Red-breasted Nuthatch and the White-breasted or Brown-head Nuthatches that are more common here? The Red-breasted Nuthatch has a rust-colored chest and an eye stripe. Can you see the difference in your bird books? Also, most of my winter sparrows are White-throated Sparrows, but I have had others, Song and Chipping Sparrows, in my yard. If you live in the country, you may also get Fox Sparrows. These are rufous and gray with a very spotted chest. They are very attractive birds. Can you see the differences between Fox Sparrows and the more common winter sparrows? Another challenge is the House and Purple Finches' identification. The Purple Finch comes to feeders occasionally in the winter. They are larger, brighter, purple crowned, have a straight upper bill (called a culmen), and usually are more striped. So, look at your feeder birds carefully.

As always, if you have any questions or would like to report sightings of birds at your feeders, please contact me at bttdriscoll@bellsouth.net. If you have hummingbirds still, please contact me.

New Hope Audubon Society Activities Calendar

Jan. 4, 7:00 PM	General Meeting: Dean Kanipe presenting information on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail NC Botanical Gardens – Totten Center
Jan. 6, 9:00 AM	Stream Watch - Trip Leader: John Kent
Jan. 7	Bird Walk: Trip Leader: Tom Driscoll; Looking for winter visitors; Meet at Mardi Gras parking lot, the intersection of Farrington Rd. & NC 54; Location: TBA; Please contact Tom 2 days ahead if you plan to join the walk
Jan./Feb.	Outer Banks Trip: Cynthia Fox of the Wild Bird Center is planning a trip to the Outer Banks in either January or February. It will include 2 overnights. Call Cynthia at the Wild Bird Center after Jan. 1 for trip dates.
Feb. 1	General Meeting: Carol Ann McCormick will discuss the Native Plants of the Carolinas: The Role of Herbaria in Research, Conservation, and Education; NC Botanical Gardens, Totten Center
Feb. 3, 9:00 AM	Stream Watch - Trip Leader: John Kent
Feb. 11, 1:00 PM	Bird Walk: Trip Leader: Tom Driscoll; Meet at parking lot of Mardi Gras Bowling Alley (intersection of Highway 54 and Farrington Rd., Durham); Destination: TBA Looking for winter visitors especially sparrows and ducks. We will be out 2-3 hours. Please call Tom 2 days prior to walk if you plan to join the walk.
Feb. 11, Time: TBA	Bird Walk: Trip Leader: Cynthia Fox; Woodcock Walk - Check with Cynthia at the Wild Bird Center for more info.

**NOTE: Exact field trip locations and dates may change due to weather, recent sightings, or other circumstances.
Please contact the field trip chair or trip leader before the trip to confirm times and meeting locations.
If there are no pre-registrants, the field trip may be cancelled.**

New Hope Audubon Society 2006-2007 Officers

OFFICE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS
President	Marsha Stephens	732-4014	stephens@mail.fpg.unc.edu
Vice-President	Robin Moran	383-3514	robomo@earthlink.net
Secretary	Pat Reid	542-2433	photopr@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Karsten Rist	490-5718	karstenrist@verizon.net
Director	Philip Johnson	933-0144	pjphilip@earthlink.net
Director	Martha Girolami	362-5759	Mgirolami@mac.com
Director	Stewart Pearce	942-7660	spearce@yankelovich.com
Conservation Chair	Joanna Hiller	451-3128	Jyhiller@yahoo.com
Education Chair	Kate Finlayson	545-0737	katefin@yahoo.com
Field Trip Chair	Dianne Byrne	929-8266	DianneByrne713@aol.com
Hospitality Chair	Martha Girolami	362-5759	Mgirolami@mac.com
Membership Chair	Vacant		
Program Chair	Tom Driscoll	932-7966	btdriscoll@bellsouth.net
Newsletter Editor	Pat Reid	542-2433	photopr@yahoo.com
Webmaster	Patrick Coin	544-3239	web@newhopeaudubon.org
Adopt-a-Highway	Phillip Johnson	933-0144	pjphilip@earthlink.net
Bird Seed Sale	Judy Murray	942-2985	jmurray@unc.edu
Eagle Count	Stewart Pearce	942-7660	spearce@yankelovich.com
Eagle Platform	Judy Murray	942-2985	jmurray@unc.edu
Important Bird Area	Marsha Stephens	732-4014	stephens@mail.fpg.unc.edu
Co-Chairs	Tom Driscoll	932-7966	btdriscoll@bellsouth.net
Mini Breeding Bird	Marsha Stephens	732-4014	stephens@mail.fpg.unc.edu
Stream Watch	John Kent	933-5650	jkent@tmug.org
Wildathon	Tom Driscoll	932-7966	btdriscoll@bellsouth.net

New Hope Audubon Society
 Box 2693
 Chapel Hill, NC 27515
www.newhopeaudubon.org

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