

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter



Volume 33, Number 7: January-February 2008

CONSERVATION CORNER The Chatham Conservation Partnership

By Carol H. Ripple

Who can keep track of conservation-minded organizations and issues in our area? There is so much going on that involves myriad stakeholders that it can be hard to know how to take it all in, let alone act. Taking a regional approach, the Chatham County Partnership was convened this year to enhance cooperation and communication among a wide array of stakeholders, one of whom is New Hope Audubon. According to the Partnership's mission statement, its purpose is *to develop and implement strategies for a community conservation vision that builds awareness protection and stewardship of Chatham County's natural resources.*

Chatham County has much to be protected. Several areas in the county have been identified in NC's Wildlife Action Plan, the Nature Conservancy's Piedmont Ecoregional Plan, and the Triangle Greenprint as high priorities for conservation efforts in the Piedmont. The North Carolina Strategic Conservation Plan developed by the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources has identified the Haw, Rocky, and Deep Rivers as some of the highest priority watersheds for aquatic wildlife conservation in the state. One of the most prominent features of the county is 46,768-acre Jordan Lake, arguably the richest wildlife area in the entire Triangle region. The bald eagles that roost on New Hope Point comprise one of the largest summer concentrations in the Eastern United States.

Amidst these natural gems, Chatham County is experiencing explosive growth. Chatham is one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina and the nation: its population grew by 12 percent from 2000 to 2003. Most of the growth has taken place in the northeastern part of the county, with new suburban communities tied to Chapel Hill and the Research Triangle. Rapid growth is fueling urbanization, changing the area's rural character and threatening its natural resources. The Partnership recognizes that there is still a window of opportunity to plan properly for anticipated population growth in a way that will allow for economic development while protecting the resources that make this area special.

The strength of the Partnership is its diverse membership. Participating organizations represent land managers and conservation advocates with differing missions, including: custodians of large areas of public land held primarily for resource conservation and utilization; scientists; regulatory authorities; educators; and conservation advocates. The groups represent local, town, county, regional, statewide, and federal interests, and all are dedicated to sustainable natural resource management, providing for human needs while retaining our natural heritage. Participating citizens are similarly dedicated.

The Partnership's first meeting was this past October, and its website is still being developed at this writing. By providing a forum for disparate interests to come together, the Partnership aims to encourage public/private partnerships to leverage resources and achieve land conservation. By enhancing coordination, the group hopes to enable participants to take advantage of the work being done by others, and to identify opportunities for working together on more ambitious projects than a single agency's resources would otherwise allow. One of its early goals is to identify and map the highest priority habitats and species in need of conservation attention in the county.

For more information on the Chatham County Partnership, contact Steering Committee Chair Sarah McRae at sarah.mcrae@ncmail.net or 919-715-1751.

The Partnership recognizes that there is still a window of opportunity to plan properly for anticipated population growth in a way that will allow for economic development while protecting the resources that make this area special.

Great Backyard Bird Count is Great Opportunity to Connect with Nature

*In February, volunteers throughout the U.S. and Canada
are invited to "Count for Fun, Count for the Future!"*

New York, NY & Ithaca, NY, 23 October 2007 — Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15–18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at www.birdcount.org. These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

"These volunteers are counting not only for fun but for the future," said Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon. "It's fun to see how many different kinds of birds can be seen and counted right in your backyard or neighborhood park. Each tally helps us learn more about how our North American birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment."

"The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family, and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds, and mystery," said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site www.birdcount.org.

The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species.

"Literally, there has never been a more detailed snapshot of a continental bird-distribution profile in history," said John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Imagine scientists 250 years from now being able to compare these data with their own!"

Already, the count results show how the numbers of some birds species have changed in recent years, such as a decline in Northern Pintails and an increase in Hooded Mergansers, consistent with trends from the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey.

"People who take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count see the results of their efforts in the news and in bird conservation work taking place across the country, said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Whether the counts occur at home, at schools or nature centers, they're more than engaging and educational science activities for young people and adults, they're a way to contribute to the conservation of birds and habitat nationwide."

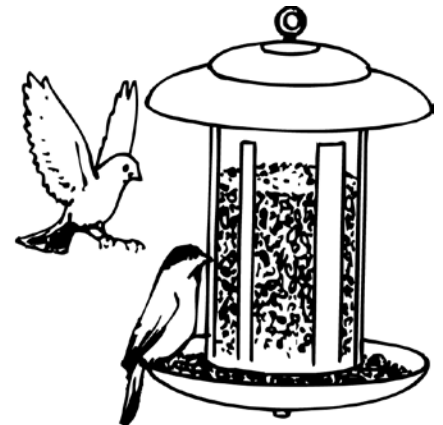
Lt. Daniel Britt, who served in Iraq 16 months, is glad to be back home in Zimmerman, MN, where he and his sons plan to join the GBBC. "We get a bunch of birds in our backyard," Britt said, "but my oldest son, Daniel, and I may cross country ski into the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge to count birds there."

For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on over 500 bird species, visit www.birdcount.org.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. www.birds.cornell.edu

Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation. www.audubon.org



A Triangle Naturalist's Almanac

Patrick Coin

Irruption!



Bird hotlines and e-mail lists are abuzz this winter with reports of northern birds that only occasionally make it to the latitude of the Carolinas. Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins have been prominent this year, with the occasional Purple Finch thrown in. There was even a report of a Common Redpoll the Piedmont, a very rare event.

Ornithologists call such erratic migratory events *irruptions*. The word is from a Latin word meaning "bursting in". Among birds, an irruptive life history is most prevalent among those that depend on the erratic food supplies of the boreal regions.



Such ecosystems are prone to booms and busts in both animal and vegetable foods. Some folk beliefs suggest that irruptions presage a harsh winter, but this is not true—birds usually irrupt due to decreases of their food supplies in their breeding areas. Snowy Owls, for instance, move south in large numbers only in years when the population of Lemmings, their usual prey, crashes. Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins move south in response to decreased crops of conifer seeds, their staple diet in winter. Other irruptive species, such as Redpolls, Purple Finches, and Evening Grosbeaks, also feed on seeds, though not necessarily those of conifers. Thus an irruption of one bird species does not necessarily correspond with an irruption of another—some years are good for Purple Finches, and other years are good for Siskins. This year we seem to be having the good luck of an irruption of several species at once. Enjoy them while they are here, because it is unlikely there will be large numbers of these species next winter. Though some irruptions are periodic—Snowy Owls tend to erupt every four years—most are not. Perhaps next year will be good for Evening Grosbeaks!

For further information on irruptive bird species, see Kricher, *A Field Guide to Eastern Forests* Cornell University, *All About Birds* (web site).

Feeder Watch

Tom Driscoll

As the days get colder and shorter, birds are eating more and I have to refill feeders more frequently. Are your birds eating more now? Have your winter visitors all arrived yet? I have at least one Red-breasted Nuthatch and have had a Purple Finch female visit my feeders. I don't see these birds every winter. Someone in Chatham County had a Common Redpoll at their feeders. This is a small bird with a tiny beak that lives in Northern Canada. We very rarely find these birds in North Carolina. There are reports of a poor cone crop in Ontario and some of the northeastern U. S.. Therefore, we may be seeing unusual finches, Evening Grosbeaks, and crossbills at our feeders. Be on the lookout for

these birds. There are also a few Baltimore Orioles wintering in our area. If you have one come to your suet feeder, you may want to consider putting out some jelly or using an oriole feeder. Some of the local bird food stores, such as the Wild Bird Center in Chapel Hill can show you these feeders. If you see one of the rare birds or want to recount another feeder story, then please contact me at btdriscoll@bellsouth.net.

Although you may have been feeding more birds, are you providing them with water? Most winters are somewhat dry here, but this winter has been especially dry. Your birds may be having trouble finding water. To ensure that they continue to come to your feeders, adding a water bath or tray would be very helpful to your birds. I would like to include some reader's bird feeding observations and stories, so please send me some.

Field Guide to Birds of North America by Edward S. Brinkley

Colyer Durovich

This is an excellent field guide for birds. It provides crisp photos of both male and female birds and, in some cases, juveniles as well. The pictures show the field-marks of the birds clearly. In the book, the birds are divided into 32 categories (families), each with an informative introduction. For each bird, there is a detailed description of its key characteristics, including vocalizations as well as field-marks. There are also defining features (field marks), which are written next to a picture featuring those particular features of the bird. The book also provides the species' Latin name and the length and wing span of the bird both in English and metric units. The detailed, up-to-date range maps show the birds' range (in color) during winter, summer, and migration. They also identify the areas that the birds inhabit year round and the areas in which the species are rare.

In the beginning of the book, the author has included information about various topics related to birds, birding, and the field guide itself. In the back of the book, there is a helpful glossary that includes many terms used in the book. There is a list of vagrant, rare, and extinct birds, a list of the endangered and threatened birds of North America, a species checklist, and a quick-look index in addition to the full length index. The covers are sturdy and waterproof. The front flyleaf explains how to use the book, shows common migration routes and birding hotspots and has a detailed color map of North America. Inside the back cover are a ruler marked with centimeters and inches and pictures labeling the parts of a bird for several bird families.

I think that this guide is extremely well-planned and very complete. Although it is not small, it is definitely not unwieldy. The one complaint I do have about this book is that it does not provide pictures of birds in flight for a great majority of birds. This was especially bothersome when I was trying to identify shorebirds. Other than that, I highly recommend this field guide.

OCTOBER TRAIL CLEAN-UP AT THE



*(Clockwise starting top left)
Before picture of the trail;
After picture of the trail;
Clean-up crew;
Finally lunch;
Gathering limbs*

Bird Seed Sale

Judy Murray

Many thanks to all of you who purchased bird seed this year enabling us to pursue our educational goals. The seed sale raised about \$3,000.00 for the club this year. Some members posted notices, approached friends, co-workers and neighbors with sale forms and as a result generated multiple orders. Many thanks for the extra effort from all of you. Also, I want to thank those members who helped on the pick-up day loading cars and delivering seed—Patsy Bailey, Norman Budnitz, Tom Driscoll, Martha Girolami, Phil Johnson and Pat Reid. Last but not least a Huge Thank You to Cynthia Fox of The Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center for allowing us to use her store for the bird seed and coffee sale.

Books Now Available

The NC Birding Trail Coastal Plain Book

This full color, spiral bound guide is now available for purchase through the NC Wildlife Resources Commission's **Wild Store**. Visit www.ncwildlife.org (look for the **Wild Store** link on the left-hand column), or call 1-866-945-3746. \$10 retail, \$6 wholesale - all proceeds go towards future support of the NC Birding Trail initiative.

Birding North Carolina: A guide to premier birding spots in NC

This book should be available at bookstores and online. For more information about Hot Birding Spots in NC go to: www.carolinabirdclub.org

NC Partners in Flight

Spring meeting, March 27th from 9:30 – 4:30 at Blue Jay Point County Park, Wake County. Agenda includes: Corporate CURE area update, NC Birding Trail update, and reports on studies of many breeding birds in NC. For more information and a copy of their newsletter go to: <http://faculty.ncwc.edu/mbrooks/pif/> for National Partners in Flight go to www.partnersinflight.org

NHAS Membership Meetings

We have some excellent speakers lined up for upcoming meetings. On January 3, 2008, we have Kenny Gay who works for the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources presenting information on the Geology of the Central North Carolina Piedmont. In my 5 years of scheduling speakers for the NHAS membership meetings, we have not had a geologist. I look forward to his presentation. On February 7, 2008, Jeff Beane of the North Carolina Herpetological Society and the North Carolina Museum of Natural History will discuss the Salamanders of North Carolina. I have been interested in salamanders since catching one in California in 1962, so I am glad Jeff can inform us of the salamanders in our state!

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!

JORDAN LAKE EAGLE PLATFORM



(Clockwise starting top left)
Getting ready;
Hot and lots of dust;
Improved trail;
Into the wheel barrows;
Jeff spreading chips.



New Hope Audubon Society Calendar of Activities

Thursday, Jan. 3 Membership Meeting at NC Botanical Center. Speaker Kenny Gay - Geology of the Central NC Piedmont. 7:00 pm

Saturday, Jan. 5 Stream Watch. with John Kent. 9:00am

Saturday, Jan. 5 Bird Walk to Local Hot Spot with Cynthia Fox, owner of Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill. Meet at the store at 7:55 AM and return to the store by 10:00 a.m. Carpools leave from the store.

Sunday, Jan. 13. Tom Driscoll will lead a Bird Walk to look for winter birds, such as ducks and sparrows. Meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at 1 pm. We plan to be out 2 hours and we will be doing some moderate hiking. Bring proper shoes and water. Please contact Tom Driscoll at btdriscoll@bellsouth.net if you have questions or plan to attend.

Sunday, Jan. 20 Woodcock Bird Walk with Cynthia Fox, owner of Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill. Weather permitting, call store for time of departure. (It depends on when "dark" starts by then.) Carpools leave from the store.

Saturday, Jan. 26 Bird Walk to Local Hot Spot with Cynthia Fox, owner of Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill. Meet at the store at 7:55 AM and return to the store by 10:00 a.m. Carpools leave from the store.

Saturday, Feb. 2 Stream Watch with John Kent. 9:00 am.

Thursday, Feb 7 Membership Meeting at NC Botanical Gardens. Speaker Jeff Beane – Salamanders of NC. 7:00 pm

Saturday, Feb. 9 Bird Walk to Local Hot Spot with Cynthia Fox, owner of Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill. Meet at the store at 7:55 AM and return to the store by 10:00 a.m. Carpools leave from the store.

Sunday, Feb. 10. Tom Driscoll will lead a Bird Walk to look for winter birds, such as ducks and sparrows. Meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at 1 pm. We plan to be out 2 hours and we will be doing some moderate hiking. Bring proper shoes and water. Please contact Tom Driscoll at btdriscoll@bellsouth.net if you have questions or plan to attend.

Feb 15 – 18 Great Backyard Bird Count-see website at www.birdcount.org

Saturday, Feb. 23 Bird Walk to Local Hot Spot with Cynthia Fox, owner of Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill. Meet at the store at 7:55 AM and return to the store by 10:00 a.m. Carpools leave from the store.

Saturday, March 15 Adopt a Highway with Phil Johnson 8:00am

Some of the United State's Most Imperiled Birds Make their Home in North Carolina

New Report Identifies Species at Greatest Risk

From Chris Canfield, Executive Director of Audubon North Carolina

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, November 28, 2007 – The National Audubon Society (Audubon) and the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) have identified 56 species of birds in North Carolina that are in need of top-priority conservation attention to ensure their continued survival. These bird species have the dubious distinction of inclusion on WatchList 2007, the newest and most scientifically sound list of America's birds at greatest risk. Unlike the birds listed on Audubon's recent survey of Common Birds in Decline, these species are often rare and limited in range; consequently, they face a more imminent threat of extinction. For the WatchList 2007 birds conservation efforts in North Carolina, as well as nationally, will play a critical role in determining their future health and survival.

The continental WatchList is based on a comprehensive analysis of population size and trends, distribution, and environmental threats that is informed and improved by extensive scientific review. WatchList 2007 is divided into two categories, "red list" species and "yellow list" species. Dividing the WatchList into two categories helps focus attention on the species of greatest concern (red list), while also highlighting other imperiled species while there is still time to keep them off the red list.

The 59 species on its "red list" are those of greatest concern, while the additional 119 merit their spots on the "yellow list" due to a combination of rarity or seriously declining numbers. Species found on either part of the WatchList demand immediate help while there is still time to save them, according to the report.

"Here in North Carolina, from the mountains to the sea, critical habitats for these species are being lost and altered at amazing rates," said Curtis Smalling, Audubon North Carolina's Important Bird Areas Coordinator. "Long leaf pine forests, barrier island habitats, high elevation forests, and shrublands are all being lost to changes in land use and increases in the state's population. We need conservation action now, while there is still time – and the WatchList helps focus that action where we need it most."

Sixteen of the red list and forty of the yellow list species occur in North Carolina as breeders, wintering species or regular migrants. One of the highest priority species is the Piping Plover, which is federally listed as "threatened." Piping Plovers nest on just a few of North Carolina's barrier islands where they face serious threats from human disturbances, off-road vehicle traffic, and introduced predators. Many more utilize barrier island beaches, intertidal shoals, and sandy spits near inlets during migration and winter. They require these habitats to survive, but these habitats are increasingly threatened by beach replenishment projects, channelization in inlets, beach and inlet stabilization projects, and human disturbance. Audubon North Carolina has worked hard to protect these birds, but they continue to face serious threats where they are afforded no protection.

North Carolina's coastal salt marshes are habitat for the Seaside Sparrow. Never common, this species has declined as a wintering species by almost 40 percent in the past forty years, according to Christmas Bird Count data. This small, grayish-brown sparrow also breeds in our coastal marshes, but very little is known about the status of the breeding population. It is likely that similar declines have occurred in its breeding population.

Further inland, the Bachman's Sparrow has declined by over 80 percent on winter counts in North Carolina during that same period. A long-leaf pine forest specialist, the Bachman's Sparrow is dependent on fire-maintained habitats. As growth and development have made more land "fire-suppressed," these small, non-descript sparrows have declined rapidly throughout their range.

And in the mountains, the beautiful Golden-winged Warbler has suffered from loss of its preferred shrubby habitat. Forest regeneration, clean farming methods, and second home development have hit this warbler very hard. Audubon North Carolina is researching the ways land owners and managers can protect this species, and is working on international projects to help Golden-wings from Canada to Nicaragua and Columbia.

Many of the yellow list species are also priority species of concern for Audubon North Carolina. Cerulean Warbler, Painted Bunting, Wilson's Plover, and many others are being helped by conservation action, management, and research by Audubon North Carolina and its many partners. The Wood Thrush is a high priority yellow list species for Audubon North Carolina. It is currently widespread across the state but is sensitive to a variety of threats, including forest fragmentation, air pollution and its associated disruptions of normal nutrient cycles, cowbird parasitism, and loss of habitats from development. Because of these factors, the breeding population of this species in North Carolina has declined by almost 65 percent. Audubon's Important Bird Areas Program is focused on delineating critical habitats for Wood Thrush and other high priority species.

Conservation of these species of highest concern also benefits the other imperiled species on the WatchList that face similar threats. Beach nesting birds like Gull-billed Tern, Least Tern, and Black Skimmer all benefit from management for Piping Plover, as well as a host of migrant species of shorebirds on the WatchList. Efforts to protect marsh habitats for Seaside Sparrow aid a variety of marshbirds, including Black, Yellow, King, and Clapper Rails, as well as other marsh-dwelling species such as Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Protecting and actively managing long leaf pine forests also benefits the federally listed Red-cockaded Woodpecker and other species. The early succession habitats preferred by Golden-winged Warblers is also the home of Prairie Warbler and Willow Flycatcher. Protection of unbroken forested tracts for Wood Thrush also benefits Cerulean Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Red-headed Woodpecker.

The new Audubon/ABC WatchList is based on the latest available data from the Christmas Bird Count and the annual Breeding Bird Survey along with other research and assessment from the bird conservation community. The data were analyzed and weighted according to methods developed through extensive peer review by the country's leading ornithologists, yielding an improved assessment of actual peril that can be used to determine bird conservation priorities and funding.

For the complete WatchList, and information on how to help, visit www.audubon.org. To learn more about Audubon North Carolina's work protecting these and other species, visit www.ncaudubon.org. For high resolution photos of priority WatchList species, B-roll and other press resources, visit www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/WatchList2007/.

Now in its second century, Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation. www.audubon.org. Audubon North Carolina is a state office of the National Audubon Society in its tenth year representing nine chapters and 10,000 members statewide.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) works to conserve native wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. ABC acts to safeguard the rarest bird species, restore habitats, and reduce threats, while building capacity in the conservation movement. ABC is a membership organization that is consistently awarded a top, four-star rating by the independent group, Charity Navigator.

WatchList 2007 Makes Headlines!

WatchList 2007, Audubon's latest report in the State of the Birds series, was issued on Wednesday, November 28th and has already garnered great coverage. This new analysis, a collaboration of Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy, identifies 178 continental U.S. and 39 Hawaiian species of great conservation concern. Ninety-eight of these are "red" list species, at risk of slipping into extinction. The WatchList was presented to reporters coast to coast in a press teleconference. Audubon President and CEO John Flicker, Director of Bird Conservation Greg Butcher, and Mike Daulton, director of Conservation Policy summarized key points from the analysis and addressed questions from reporters. They were joined by American Bird Conservancy President George Fenwick and WatchList co-author, David Pashley. As with the Common Birds in Decline report issued in June, Audubon's integrated outreach effort targeted both national and state level media - with Audubon representatives in virtually every state to promote locally significant findings.

In addition, Science, Communications and Information Systems staff collaborated to launch a new "WatchList 2007" web section. <http://web1.audubon.org/science/species/watchlist/>

The stories listed in this issue are a sample of what was written in the early hours across the country, and we expect coverage to continue. Additional stories will be highlighted in a subsequent edition of In the News.

Study: One-quarter of U.S. Bird Species at Risk

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/2007-11-28-birdlist_N.htm

More than 1/4 of U.S. Birds Threatened: Report

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN27534219>

Birds in Peril

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/72635>

50 Bay Area Bird Species Placed on National Watch List

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/11/29/MN3ETKKQ2.DTL&hw=Audubon&sn=001&sc=1000>

More than 25% of U.S. Birds Need Help, New Report Says

http://www.philly.com/philly/health_and_science/20071129_More_than_25_of_U_S_birds_need_help_new_report_says.html



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Wildathon Co-Chairs	Vacant		

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