

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter



Volume 34, Number 2: March-April 2009

Renowned Researcher Erich Jarvis to Address ANC Annual Meeting

by Robin Moran

“In the past few decades scientists have learned that the basis of everything they thought they knew about bird brains — that they were largely comprised of the most primitive and instinctual of brain structures — was wrong. Fully 75% of the brains of parrots, hummingbirds, and thousands of other species of songbirds is actually made up of a sophisticated information processing system that works much the same way as the locus of human higher-mindedness, the cerebral cortex.” (from NOVA Science NOW Website)

This is research at the cutting edge, and Dr. Erich Jarvis is at the center of it. We are honored to have him as a speaker at the 2009 AUDUBON North Carolina Annual Meeting which will be hosted this year, for the first time, by New Hope Audubon.

There are 28 orders of mammals only four of which can be characterized as “vocal learners.” They are the cetaceans (whales, porpoises, dolphins), bats, birds, and human beings. Dr. Jarvis aims to find out why this is so, and how these groups pull it off, and his pioneering research has already brought him international acclaim in scientific circles at an impressively young age.

How does the brain learn the behavior that results in speech? Dr. Jarvis has his own neurobiology lab at Duke’s Medical Center where he and his fellow researchers explore the molecular pathways involved in vocal learning based on data gathered in the wild. These studies include the evolution of vocal communication, and the way sounds and speech are remembered. Interesting as these findings about songbird communication have been, they have the added fascination of helping to further our understanding of human brains as well.

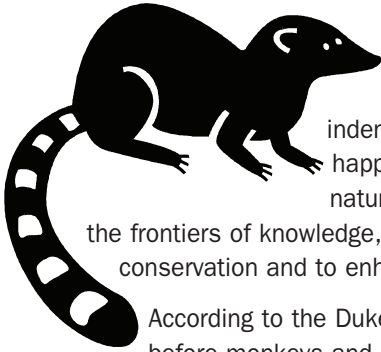
Register to attend the ANC Annual Meeting on April 18, and learn more about Dr. Jarvis’s work! Conference brochures with registration info. should arrive in your mailbox in a few weeks.

LEMUR ALERT! LEMUR DOUBLE EXPOSURE!

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**A Meeting Lecture on Lemurs on March 9 +
A Field Trip to the Duke Lemur Center on March 28**
.....

***We are excited to have a reservation for a New Hope Audubon Society group tour of the Lemur Center at Duke University!
So save the date and tell us you’re coming.***

FIRST, A FUN FACT: Did you know that one of the missions of Duke University is to promote human happiness? Did you know that one of the purposes of the Duke Lemur Center is to fulfill that happiness promotion goal?



The Duke Lemur Center views its mission as fulfilling one Duke University's founding indenture goals, namely to "develop our resources, increase our wisdom and promote human happiness." The Duke Lemur Center promotes research and understanding of prosimians and their natural habitat. The Center's mission statement tells us that this research is a "means of advancing the frontiers of knowledge, to contribute to the educational development of future leaders in international scholarship and conservation and to enhance the human condition by stimulating intellectual growth and sustaining global biodiversity."

According to the Duke Lemur Center, lemurs are prosimians – relatives of monkeys, apes and humans that evolved before monkeys and apes and are representative of primates that existed fifty million years ago. They evolved in isolation on the island of Madagascar and flourished until humans began to settle there slightly less than two thousand years ago. Population growth and slash and burn agriculture have put these fabulous creatures at risk. According to the Lemur Center, one third of the lemur species have become extinct and more are on the brink of extinction.

We will learn more about lemurs at the New Hope Audubon Society March 9th Meeting when Meredith Barrett, a Duke University graduate student, tells us about her field work with lemurs in Madagascar.

Meanwhile, for more information about lemurs and the Duke Lemur Center, please go to their website: <http://lemur.duke.edu>. For a heads up on Meredith Barrett's work, check out her blog on her summer research: <http://lemurhealth.blogspot.com>.



What? A New Hope Audubon Society Tour of the Lemurs at Duke University

Who? Open to New Hope Audubon Society Members and Family

When? March 28, 2009, 2:00 p.m. One hour tour.

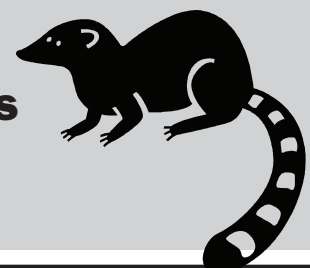
Where? Duke University Lemur Center, Durham (Detailed directions and address when you reserve.)

Why? The Duke Lemur Center is one of the unique treasures in our backyard that make living here in the Triangle so special.

Fee: \$4 per person.

RSVP: Please make your reservation no later than March 10, 2009. Email Jane Tigar at taratigar@yahoo.com to hold your place. You will receive a confirmation email and directions to the Lemur Center. For email-free New Hope Audubon Society members, please call Jane at 919 545 9133 to reserve your place.

**Get tree-friendly news updates
while they are still news!**



A Triangle Natural Almanac

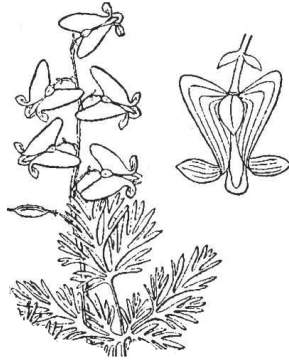
by Patrick Coin

Dutchman's Breeches – Odd and Rare Spring Flower

One of our rarest spring wildflowers, Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) blooms in March and early April. Its low, finely-divided foliage is distinctive, but seldom noticed until the showy racemes of white flowers appear. These have quite an odd form—the entrance projecting down beneath two large spurs. The overall shape of the flower is said to resemble flared leggings characteristic of the Dutch. (This probably refers to the Dutch settlers of New York, where the flower is common. This style of trousers

is now called Knickerbockers.) Bumblebees are the principal pollinators of the flowers, as their "tongue" (proboscis) is just long enough to reach the nectar in the spurs of the flowers. The cold-tolerant bumblebees are also among the few large insects about in early spring when these flowers bloom. The seeds of Dutchman's Breeches are borne

in pods and each has a fleshy body (elaiosome) that attracts ants. They carry the seed off, consume the elaiosome, and discard the viable seed at some distance from the plant. Seed dispersal by ants is common to several other (unrelated) showy spring wildflowers, such as trilliums and Bloodroot.



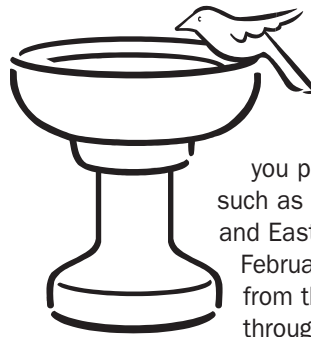
Dutchman's Breeches is a member of the botanical family Fumariaceae, and a close relative of the cultivated bleeding heart. Other names for the flower include "White Hearts" and "Little-Blue-Stagger". The latter refers to the neurotoxic nature of the blue-green foliage—it contains a poisonous alkaloid, and has been fatal to cattle that fed on it. Other members of the genus *Dicentra* appear to have the same toxic properties. Needless to say, humans should admire the flowers but refrain from nibbling on the herb-like foliage!

Dicentra cucullaria likes it cool, being found primarily in the Northeast. Its range extends down the Appalachians into the South. There are some isolated populations in the Mountain West, and the local population in the lower Piedmont appears to be disjunct from the Mountain population. In our area it is found in very cool habitats, mostly north-facing slopes. I have seen it along the Eno River at Penny's Bend and nearby Willie Duke's Bluff (Durham County).

For more information on Dutchman's Breeches, see: Eastman, *The Book of Forest and Thicket*; Coffey, *The History and Folklore of North American Wildflowers*; *Flora of North America* (efloras.org)

Feeder Watch

by Tom Driscoll



You should be receiving this newsletter in mid-February. This is often the coldest part of the year. Birds should be feeding greedily from your feeders. Are

you putting out more feed? Often, birds, such as Brown Thrashers, Pine Warblers, and Eastern Bluebirds feed on suet during February. The winter visitors, migrants from the north, will usually remain through February, March, and some into

April. This year we have had an irregular visitor from the north. Pine Siskins have invaded this year. I have had as many as thirty five of them at my feeders at one time! They eat nyger seed, millet, and some small sunflower seeds. Have you seen them at your feeder? If so, how many?

We also have our regular visitors from the north and/or the mountains. Have you noticed the Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows at your feeders? They are common feeder birds at platform feeders or picking up the "leftovers" on the grounds. Another winter visitor is the Red-breasted Nuthatch. These birds look like our resident White-breasted Nuthatches, but have red breasts and a white stripe through the eyes. I have also noticed Purple Finches at my feeders. These birds are bigger than their cousins, the House Finch. They can be difficult to tell apart. The Purple Finch usually has more purple in its plumage. Also, the upper bill, called the culmen, is straight whereas the House Finch has a curved culmen.

If you don't recognize these birds or the bird names, then may I suggest you pick one a bird guide that are available in many stores. 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.

Also, it is time to clean out your bluebird boxes or houses or make sure your bluebird boxes are up. Clean out your bluebird houses by removing old nests and clean out with a weak bleach solution. If you would like to purchase a bluebird house, the New Hope Audubon Society sells them for only \$15. Please contact me at the email address below if you would like to purchase one. Free delivery!

FEEDER WATCH continues to report 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.

New Year at Emerald Isle

by Phil and Sharon Bushnell

January 1: We arrived at Cedar Point boardwalk at 4 p.m. on a crispy cold, sunny New Year's Day. After the 3-hr drive, the fresh air, sunshine and open space felt great, but the cold was penetrating. Few birds were visible: an egret balanced on a railing; a ruddy duck swam in the river; a belted kingfisher sat on a very distant tree; and a great blue heron waded for fish across the river. No towhees or waxwings this time, but as we paused along the woodland trail where several dead trees stand, we heard the deep, slow hammering thunk of a large woodpecker. Sure enough, high on a snag, a pileated woodpecker ripped off bark and dead wood in search of prey. It paused – but at the same moment, hammering commenced again. Looking a binocular field down the tree, we spotted a twin woodpecker, its red crown catching the afternoon sunlight. Soon it flew across our viewfield and began digging for bugs on another snag. Success already!

January 2: The morning at the west end of Emerald Isle dawned clear, calm, and surprisingly warm. Along the path to the point, yellow-rumped warblers, purple finches, and a red-breasted nuthatch foraged under the watchful eye of mocking birds, perched observantly on their equidistant powerline poles. On the beach, long lines of black scoters snaked energetically over the shorebreak, the odd brown pelican meandered along the surf, and dolphins leaped and spun in a calm patch out beyond. Near them, northern gannets excitedly worked their way into the air and power-dived, wings tucked javelin-like, back into the water, raising spray visible from shore.

Following our guidebook – Birding Trails of Coastal North Carolina – we headed for the east end of the island to explore new places. First stop, Fort Macon, where a southwesterly afternoon wind kicked up surf and small craft warnings. A long string of fishing boats headed in through Beaufort Inlet for shelter, while common loons dove for fish. Various sandpipers and a Wilson's plover scampered along the shoreline, and a willet sauntered through a collection of herring gulls huddled on the sand, beaks to the wind.

Next stop, Hoop Pole Creek, where a short boardwalk from a Food Lion parking lot led to an abandoned road that terminated on a grassy sandbank overlooking the sound. Not much here; two little blue herons eventually emerged from the grasses in the sound, flushed by an oysterman as he poled his skiff along the edge of the grass.

Then Pine Knoll shores, at the NC Aquarium, where a lovely trail led from the parking lot into the T. Roosevelt nature preserve. Rather quiet here as well: despite long stretches of marshland to the south and a short view of the sound to the north, the only bird visible was an immature little blue heron – pure white, with greenish legs, easily taken for an egret – poking along in the marsh, picking tasty bits of something from the base of the reeds.

January 3 – Last Stop: Forested hills are a rare find on the barrier islands, and Emerald Isle Woods has them: its ancient sand dunes are now totally forested with grasses, pines, and live oaks, bordering the sound just west of the Hwy 58 bridge. Yellow-rumped warblers and robins were plentiful; a hairy woodpecker worked a dead pine; and a shy thrush peeked out of the foliage just long enough to show its spotted breast. The trail over the dunes ended at – what else? – a boardwalk projecting a few hundred feet into the sound. The bench at the end provided a picturesque view of the sound and the bridge, but a paucity of waterfowl. Just one distant goldeneye cruised among the reeds, and three great blue herons stood their baleful watch over their territories out in the marsh.

On the return, though, tracking a faint ticking sound under the boardwalk eventually revealed a winter wren, making its cautious way through the reeds. At which point it was time for us to make our cautious way back over the bridge, through Swansboro, Jacksonville, Warsaw and Beulahville to I-40 and home.

New Hope Audubon Society is a chapter of Audubon North Carolina. While you may be reluctant to subscribe to anything that would add another email to your inbox, you just may find Audubon North Carolina's E-News worthy of inclusion. You will learn about our victories in the court room and what we are working on in our state. You may also find local activities you'd like to participate in or inspiration to start a conservation project in your immediate area. Subscribers get periodic E-News and Action Alerts with timely updates on events, news, and policy activities. To sign up send a blank email to iphillips@audubon.org with the subject line: **SUBSCRIBE to Ida Phillips.**

Bald Eagle Count Report

by Martha Girolami

Five parties counted 14 eagles – 7 adult and 7 immature on January 11, 2009. I need to look back and find out the range and average numbers counted in January's past. The count day was slightly foggy and overcast with temperatures in the 50's and no wind. At least one eagle pair were seen perched in the same tree. Our next Bald Eagle count will be held on April 19, 2009 from 7 to 8:30 a.m. We will offer the eagle count as a field trip for guests attending the NC Audubon Annual meeting beginning on April 18th. Please contact Martha Girolami if you would like to join up and count.



Volunteers Needed for the Audubon NC Annual Meeting

NHAS is hosting Audubon NC's annual meeting. The meeting is the weekend of April 17, 18, and 19, 2009. We need help in the following areas:

1. Putting together registration packets.
2. Registering participants on Friday night from 5-8 p.m.
3. Registering participants on Saturday morning from 7-8 a.m.
4. Accompanying out of town participants to dinner on Friday night.
5. Donation of Raffle Prizes for the meeting.
6. Decorations for the annual meeting dinner on Saturday night.

I am sure we will need more volunteers as the time comes closer please let Bo Howes (rchowess007@hotmail.com, 919-370-3202) know if you can help with any of the above items or if you can be available to help in any other way.

Bald Eagle Count Report

by Phil Johnson, Chairman



This REMINDER ref our next funsie!!!!!! = March 14, 0830. We will go earlier when it gets warmer ... getback, every one.

New Hope (Audubon) for Conservation!

by Jane Tigar, Conservation Chair

Hope was the campaign theme of our new president and hope continues to be theme of our new administration. Here's to hoping that our new administration is able to put into play the policy ideas many conservationists have been hoping and begging for. As I write this, Al Gore just finished outlining his ideas to the Senate and President Obama has promised us a Green New Deal. A central theme of National Audubon, Audubon North Carolina and our chapter, with its Inauguration 2009 thematically-correct name, the New Hope Audubon Society, is that what is good for the birds is good for the environment.

Audubon is first and foremost a conservation group. Being a member of New Hope Audubon automatically makes you a member of Audubon North Carolina and the National Audubon Society. Our focus is birds but it is not a narrow focus. Birds give us a "birds-eye view" of the conservation needs of our region, our country, our continent and our planet.



Even if it appears that the new administration is pro-environment, it does not mean our work as conservationists is over. It means that we have the opportunity to get to work and implement the ideas that we have been promoting, urging and sometimes begging our governments to adopt. I hope this means a period in which we can shift our energy from suing, protesting, complaining and begging to helping our various levels of government make the best decisions for making ours a more bird-friendly and therefore greener society.

Please think about those issues that you see that are important to you and send us an email and let us know your concerns. We have the New Hope Audubon Society chat group on Yahoo – please join it and post questions or news items. Don't keep your good ideas to yourself. If you see an issue that you believe needs addressing, let us know so we can address the issue and do something.

Upcoming New Hope Audubon Society Membership Meeting Presentations for March and April 2009

Our March 5, 2009 speaker will be Meredith Barrett who will give a presentation on the Lemurs of Madagascar. She is working on her doctoral thesis and has spent a lot of time in Madagascar studying lemurs. We will get a close up look and presentation of the life of lemurs.

On April 2, 2009, Judy Hinterliter-Smith and David K. Smith will discuss either the Flora and Fauna of Peru or the Flora and Fauna of Antarctica. They have traveled to both areas in the past two years and always have very good photographs and a wonderful commentary. They often augment their presentations with recordings of birds, so we will be in for a big treat!

As always, our membership meetings are held at the Totten Center at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens on the first Thursday of every month (except June, July, and August). The gardens are on Highway 15-501 at the intersection of Old Mason Farm Road on the southeast corner. There is construction of a new building in the old parking lot, so please park behind the building. Go south on Highway 15-501 and turn east on Manning Drive. Go one block to Coker Drive and turn left. Go one block and turn left again. After one block, turn left into the parking lot behind the Totten Center.

The meetings start at 7 p.m. 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 at a meeting!

I am always looking for speakers or nature/environmental topics. 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 please contact me at btdriscoll@bellsouth.net.

New Hope Audubon Society Activities Calendar

Thursday March 5 **Membership Meeting** at NC Botanical Gardens Totten Center at 7:00 p.m. Speaker will be Meredith Barrett on the Lemurs of Madagascar.

Saturday March 7 **Bird Walk at Duke Gardens** with Cynthia Fox. Meet at Gardens parking lot at 7:55 a.m.

Saturday March 7 **Stream Watch** with John Kent. 9:00 a.m.

Sunday March 8 Tom Driscoll will lead **Bird Walk at Kerr Lake**. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Mardi Gras parking lot. We will look for loons, ducks, and wintering sparrows. Bring lunch and hiking boots. The walk will be easy on flat land mostly. Please email Tom at btdriscoll@bellsouth.net if you intend to go on the trip.

Saturday March 21, **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 a.m. and return to the store by 10:00 a.m. Carpools leave from the store.

Thursday April 2 **Membership Meeting** at NC Botanical Gardens Totten Center at 7:00 p.m. The speaker will be Judy Hinterliter-Smith and David K. Smith will discuss either the Flora and Fauna of Peru or the Flora and Fauna of Antarctica.

Saturday April 4 **Bird Walk at Duke Gardens** with Cynthia Fox. Meet at Gardens parking lot at 7:55 a.m.

Saturday April 4 **Stream Watch** with John Kent. 9:00 a.m.

Friday April 17 thru Sunday April 19 **Audubon North Carolina Annual Meeting** hosted by New Hope Audubon.

Saturday April 18, **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 a.m. and return to the store by 10:00 a.m. Carpools leave from the store.

Sunday April 19 **Eagle Count** with Martha Girolami from 7:00 a.m. Contact Martha for more information.



New Hope (Audubon) for a Great Count!

Let's Have the Best Ever "Great Backyard Bird Count" February 13 to 16

by Jane B. Tigar, Conservation Chair

The nation-wide Great Backyard Bird Count is here – ahem, we're not kidding, U.S. Postal Service willing, it should be almost upon us as you read this.

Right alongside the national Hope theme of the year, or as we say here at New Hope Audubon Society, the "New Hope" theme, is the nationwide call for service. The Great Backyard Bird Count, organized and sponsored by the Cornell Lab for Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, is a great opportunity to provide service to the birding community.

What Exactly is the "Great Backyard Bird Count"?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. You don't have to be an expert birder, beginner birders are welcome. You only need to commit 15 minutes on one of four days – February 13, 14, 15 and 16. Of course, you can also do more – in fact, as much as you want, each of the four days of the count.

The data we collect helps identify trends in wintering birds, who is where and in what quantity, who's in trouble, who's doing well. It helps keep track of and contributes to our understanding of irruptive species such as the red-breasted nuthatch. For the previous two years, many of you may have seen at your feeders these charming cousins to our more familiar brown headed nuthatches. This year, I don't think I've seen a single red-breasted nuthatch. When the Count numbers are released, we'll be able to see where they have been – and I may discover that they are right here, in someone else's backyard in the Triangle.

This is also a great opportunity to experience how grass roots activism really does add up. Your data, even if only for 15 minutes on one day, when multiplied by say, 80,000, truly does add up. In 2008, participants reported more than 9.8 million birds of 635 species. Participants – people just like you – submitted over 85,000 checklists. Last year's checklist total was an all-time record for the count. Let's do our part to help meet or make a new record.



When you do your Count, and we're counting on you to join us, why not post a report on what you saw on our New Hope Audubon Society Yahoo Group? It's fun to share the information and to learn what others are seeing near you.

How to Join the Great Backyard Bird Count 2009 and Submit Your Checklist

Log onto the Great Backyard Bird Count website for information about the count, how to count and how to submit your results. If you have any questions, contact a NHAS board member for help.

Here's the website address:

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html>

Don't forget to share your results with us on the NHAS Yahoo Group.

New Hope Audubon Society 2008-2009 Officers

OFFICE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS
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Director	Vacant		
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Eagle Count	Martha Girolami	362-5759	mgiorlami@mac.com
Eagle Platform	Robert "Bo" Howes	370-3202	rchowes007@hotmail.com
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Important Bird Areas: Jordan Lake Chair	Robert "Bo" Howes	370-3202	rchowes007@hotmail.com
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Wildathon Co-Chairs	Tom Driscoll	932-7966	btdriscoll@bellsouth.net
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