

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter



Volume 34, Number 3: May-June 2009

Over 30 New Hope Audubon Members and their Guests Experience Happiness at the Duke Lemur Center

by Jane Tigar, Conservation Chair



Two Ring-Tailed Lemurs, holding hands. Sorry about the blur, they would not sit still no matter how much I begged.

Judging by the almost non-stop smiles of the 33 New Hope Audubon members and their guests who visited the Duke Lemur Center on March 28, the center is fulfilling its mission to “promote human happiness.”

I don't know what it is about the lemurs, but they had me and pretty much all the humans I took time out to observe (which, was not often as the lemurs were very distracting) smiling during the entire hour-long tour.

Was it that they are so cute, cuddly looking and playful? Was it a sense of wonder that these fascinating creatures exist at all? Even without the information about lemur behavior, habitat and history from our two capable guides, Aaron and Sarah, I think we would have been entranced. I was in Sarah's group and when we paused by the enclosure, she asked us what our first reaction was to this particular kind. I poked my head in the window, with several others and we reported that we didn't have much of a reaction because we couldn't see the

lemurs. It turns out that these arboreal creatures were taking a nap in a hammock and all we could see was the sag of the cloth in which they were resting. Sarah then told us that if we could see them, she is guessing we would say what most people say: They are adorable! I want one!

This particular little lemur, whose name I forgot, Sarah said was fluffy and the cutest of the bunch, and, in her tour guide experience, the one most people are drawn to and say they want to take home, but it turns out to be aggressive. Lemurs are, however, endangered species, and, aggressive variety or not, we are not permitted to have them as house pets, which can be disappointing to those of us who place a high premium on “cute.” Perhaps this explains why the Lemur Center does such a swift business of selling lemur stuffed animals in the gift shop. But, even if we could have them as pets, Sarah and someone in the informational video that preceded the actual tour, tells us they don't make very good house pets.

Apparently, part of their territorial behavior is to make themselves as pungently odoriferous as possible. In the lemur universe, he who smells the most intense – an odor unpleasant to humans, Sarah reports – wins the real estate. Now that I think of it, perhaps that is true, in humans, too.

Just moments after Sarah showed us two red ruffed lemurs and said she hoped we would get to hear their calls, because it's indescribable, the red ruffed lemurs let out a series of hollers that, well, are indescribable. It felt like an army of lemurs must have been doing it, but Sarah assured us that it was only two.

Among my favorite new facts was that Duke lemurs have developed a call for “Copperhead Snake Alert!”, a call not shared by lemurs in Madagascar where copperheads do not exist. Also, in the nocturnal building are two lemurs that store fat during their



New Hope Audubon Members at the beginning of our tour.

Continued on page 2.

WILDATHON 2009

**Want to make a difference in your community?
We need your support to continue the nature advocacy and
environmental work we do for Chatham, Durham, and Orange Counties.**

***The 2009 New Hope Audubon Society Wildathon, our annual fund raising activity,
begins in mid-April and runs through June 1 and we NEED you to participate! 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). We have provided funds for the purchase of the New Hope Creek corridor that is currently being developed as a park.
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 you 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. 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 or Karsten Rist at 490-5718 or karstenrist@verizon.net. Any contribution is greatly appreciated!

DUKE LEMUR CENTER ARTICLE continued from page 1



Coquerel's Sifalka

periods of torpor, when food is scarce in Madagascar. They are the lesser mouse lemurs that store up to 35% of its body weight in fat in their hind legs and tail. Similarly, the nocturnal fat tailed dwarf lemurs store fat in their tail for keeping itself fed throughout its period of torpor from April/May to September/October. And finally, for Paul Newman, Frank Sinatra and Elizabeth Taylor fans, the (bright!) blue eyed lemurs we saw are the only primates other than humans that have blue eyes.

One question several people asked me, even as they were happily waiting for the lemur tour to begin, was why are we at New Hope Audubon doing a tour of the lemur center? The answer is, in addition to that it sounded like fun, is that Audubon is first and foremost a conservation organization. Everything we do and advocate is for conservation that yes, helps birds, but also helps all flora and fauna that live in the same ecosystem as the birds. As I've said before in this newsletter, if it's good for the birds, it's good for everyone else, too. That's why

National Audubon has focused so heavily on the issues of global warming. There is nothing truly "narrow" about bird conservation because all species, included us, are interconnected.

The Duke Lemur Center, in addition to promoting human happiness, is also a conservation-oriented group. Their focus on lemur conservation also means, by necessity, conservation and protection of the forested areas of Madagascar, the only place that lemurs exist naturally in the wild. The Lemur Center, which has the most lemurs of any place in the world other than Madagascar, is one of the treasures of our region.

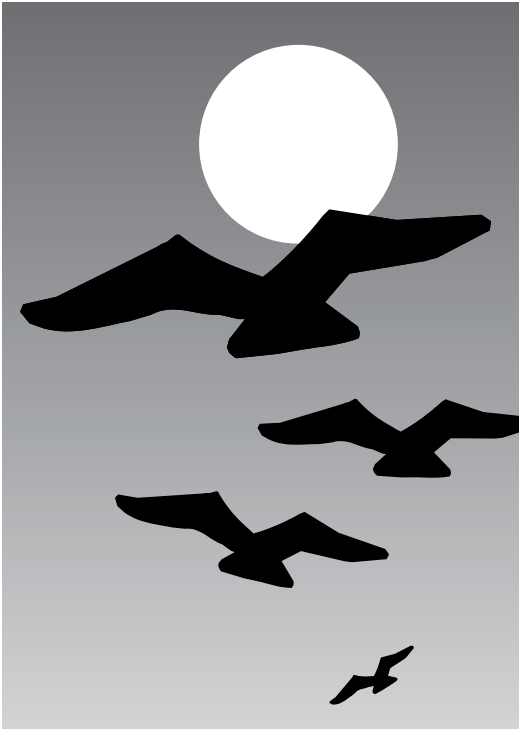
If you missed this trip and want to go, let us know and if there's enough interest, we'll try to organize another tour next year.



Tour guide Sarah introducing us to nocturnal prosimians and getting us ready to enter the darkened building where we would see nocturnal lemurs as well as lorises and bushbabies.

Calling All Citizen Scientists – and Wannabes: It's Time for the National Nightjar Survey Again

by Jane Tigar, Conservation Chair



Have you ever experienced the joy of hearing the song of a Whip-poor-will, a Chuck-will's-widow or a Common nighthawk? If you have, this is for you. If you haven't, this is especially for you.

Last year, New Hope Audubon Society made a three-year commitment to survey the Saxapahaw Route. It was so much fun to do that last year's team members, Julie and David Holmes and Jane and Michael Tigar will continue that route ...

But, don't feel left out – there are lots of un-adopted routes in our area, and probably one that is far more convenient for you, available for adoption.

We can teach you how to monitor a route – just let us know and we'll help you find a route near you and get you started.

It only takes several hours one evening during the window period.

I think I speak for the whole group – those of us who did the Saxapahaw route last year have all been eager for this year's "window" to come around. It is very special to be out on the side of the road at night, listening for the calls of nightjars.

The protocol is very straight forward. And, that sub-head above is only a tiny bit misleading. It really takes a couple of hours during daylight to survey the one-mile route and mark ten stops along the way plus the "fun" part of

listening for the nightjar calls. It helps to preview the route before you begin, because at night it is difficult to identify the route stops.

This is the U.S. Nightjar Survey Network's third year gathering data on the population distribution and population trends on this group of declining species.

According to Mike Lewis, the National Nightjar survey's national coordinator, "the beginning years of data collection has already helped in explaining how the composition of habitats in local landscapes influences nightjar abundance. In turn, these data will one day help to explain population declines. However, there is still need for more routes to be surveyed, greater geographic and species coverage, and longer-term count data."

Mike says that the continuing success of Nightjar Survey Network relies entirely on participation of people like us. So please join the inaugural Saxapahaw team and consider adopting a route near you.

The nightjar survey time window is centered on the full moon periods. The lunar schedule for 2009 is not as conducive to the survey as it was in previous years. Because the first full moon of the breeding season appears too early in May to avoid counting migrants we have decided on one later window for much of the lower 2/3 of the country and two windows are available for the northern 1/3 of the country. The later survey window is not available for the southern United States because calling rates are expected to be too low at that time to produce good results.

It really takes a couple of hours during daylight to survey the one-mile route and mark ten stops along the way plus the "fun" part of listening for the nightjar calls.

The 2009 window for surveying a route is from May 31 through June 15.

Please contact Jane Tigar at taratigar@yahoo.com if you would like further information.

Field Trip to West Jordan Lake Sites

On January 11, 2009, Tom Driscoll led a field trip to several sites along the west side of Jordan. Linda Gaines, Eric Scholz and Michelle, and Harry Messenger also attended the field trip. We stopped at the wetlands near the intersection of Big Woods Rd. and Jack Bennett Rd.. We saw several Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-throated Sparrows, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk there. Next, we stopped a few miles south where there is water access. We saw many sparrows, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Pine Warblers, and excellent looks at Cedar Waxwings. Linda took some photographs of the waxwings (see below). We also saw salamander (probably Spotted Salamander) eggs in a tiny pond. Cricket Frogs were also calling. At our last stop, we went to the NC Forestry Education Center where there is also access to the water. We saw lots of Ring-billed Gulls and Double-crested Cormorants, but no Bonaparte's Gulls or any ducks.



BlueBird Surprise

by Jane B. Tigar, Conservation Chair

Yes, I read the New Hope Audubon Newsletter, too, and when Tom Driscoll told us it was time to clean out the blue bird boxes and prepare them for this year's bluebirds, I got moving. I got a clean old T shirt for a rag and was headed outside when I saw a male bluebird entering the bluebird house and instantly backing out, flapping wings and hovering in the air in front of the box entrance. There were some vocals, another bluebird waiting on the branch of a tree nearby, another fly-in attempt, wild flapping and hovering, and more vocals.

Uh oh. Predator time.

A little background: I was under the impression that we had a bluebird pair wintering through and using the house.

The last time I peeked,

there was a classic bluebird nest

inside. There had been lots of bluebird activity

in and out of that box all winter long. I thought it was

a good idea, though, to freshen up the place because

last year, a bluebird pair had built a second nest on top of the original nest and then fell victim to a predator. I'm going

to skip a graphic description of the ghoulish crime scene I

found within. Let's just say that I thoroughly agree with one

of our New Hope Audubon members who told me she thought there should be a support group for bluebird box owners.

I did a little research to find out what happened and why

there were two nests. A bluebird expert listed on a bluebird

website told me that I should not let a second nest get built

because it sets the nest too high in the box and makes the

birds vulnerable to predators. She assured me it isn't rude to

check the boxes often, in fact, it helps the bluebirds.

I had planned never to let that happen again, but with this

strange scene at the box, I thought maybe I was too late

and already we had a predator and I'd be weeping when I

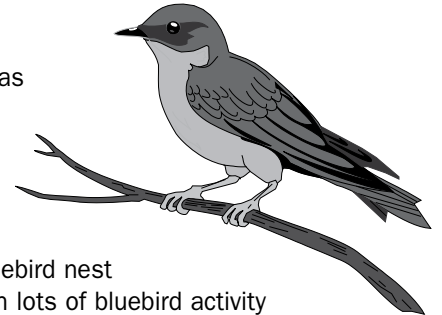
inspected the box.

Being a yoga teacher, in addition to other things, I guided myself in Bluebird Nest Box Inspection Posture:

1. Stand to the side of Bluebird Box, inhale, open the nest box door lock.
2. Exhale, close your eyes and simultaneously lift the door open.
3. Inhale and pause.
4. Exhale and open your eyes only a teeny bit.
5. Peek.

Two big eyes peeked back at me. I see two little tiny gray ears, a little tiny quivering nose.

I'm from New York City. I had no idea what I was looking at. I



Dear New Hope Audubon ...

By the time you read this we will have successfully hosted the Audubon North Carolina Annual Meeting. Everyone will have had a great time, our field trips will have been stunning and our speaker gripping, informative, and just plain fabulous. In real time, we are feverishly working to put the finishing touches on this meeting. I cannot possibly thank by name all those who have answered the call and helped make this event meet the lofty standards of Audubon North Carolina. I would be remiss if I did not publicly thank Robin Moran for finding and securing our speaker, Dr. Erich Jarvis. I also must thank Pat Reid for her hard work in developing the brochure and with Linda Gaines putting together the centerpieces for the gala dinner. Tom Driscoll also deserves thanks for coordinating and leading the field trips. Finally, Karen Olson also deserves our thanks for securing our meeting site and accommodations. Many others including all those who helped prepare registration packets, lead field trips, greet out of town guests, and all of those other innumerable tasks necessary for putting on an event of this magnitude deserve our gratitude as well. I must also recognize the hard work of the staff of Audubon North Carolina to put together this event. Their guidance has been essential in this effort. Thanks to you all. Cheers!

Bo Howes, President of NHAS



phoned my neighbor and fellow NHAS member Sally Earnest. "Sounds like a flying squirrel," she said and came right over to check out the scene.

It turns out, Sally's guess was right. The new tenant is a flying squirrel. I know this because while Sally and I stood there, the squirrel flew to the tree that is a convenient distance from the box so that fledgling bluebirds would have somewhere close by for their first flight.

I then thought I should check and see if she had attacked an early clutch of bluebird eggs or babies and that was when I realized there were two nests. On top of last year's bluebird nest was a new one, complete with specks or red and what I think are orange cat hairs – perhaps I am being overly romantic, but I was deeply touched to recognize some of the lint and cat hair from our dryer that I put out hoping a wild creature would recycle it for nesting material. I am too short to see inside the double-decker nest so I went to the tree where Sally had spotted the flying squirrel trying to look invisible — you know the look, frozen onto the bark in one position, barely blinking. The "I'm not moving therefore you cannot see me" squirrel pose.

Then, what in retrospect should have thought of from the start, it occurred to me she might not be a predator, she might be a mother. I walked over towards her: "Do you have babies in there? If you do, I won't clean out the box," I asked. She didn't answer, or if she did, I didn't hear her. I repeated my question, promising she would be welcome to stay there with babies. (I have no idea what Sally thought of this part of the scene and do not intend to find out.)

I then remembered seeing a flash of pink when she flew to the tree. I walked back to the nest box and looked on the mulch and there was a tiny hairless pink creature on the mulch just in front of the nest box, wriggling around and thank goodness, very much alive. I gently picked up the baby in the clean old T shirt I had planned to use for cleaning the box and carefully placed it on top of the nest. Sally searched around the tree and the box to see if any other babies had fallen out, but there were, thank goodness, none.

I closed the nest box door and Sally and I went into my house and we stood vigil in the sun room, watching Momma flying squirrel who was still in her invisibility cloak on the tree.

Fifteen minutes later, Sally and I exhaled as Momma leapt back to the nest box and went inside. I have since watched from the window, looking for signs of life in the nest box. Occasionally it sways when no shrubs or trees are swaying. Just the other day, I saw a repeat of the bluebird house-shopping, flapping and hovering scene. So I went outside and stood at a respectful distance and saw those big eyes and quivering nose in the entry hole of the box. Exhale. At that moment, I realized I had been holding my breath for a few days, needing more than a swaying box for verification that

Momma was still there, looking after her babies and that my human intrusion had not caused a terrible harm.

On flyingsquirrels.com, I learned it takes 84 days for southern flying squirrel babies to be independent. Sally and I have marked our calendars for June 3, 2009. Meanwhile, we've been trying to get the word out to the bluebirds that there are two really great birdhouses clean, ready and rent-free at Sally's place.

Feeder Watch

by 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.

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 soon and our summer visitors are already arriving. Can you recognize our local birds? If you watch and listen, you should hear cardinals, chickadees, and titmice. Other local birds are the Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Towhee, and Chipping Sparrow. Knowing the calls of our local birds will help you recognize other calls that may indicate a migrant such as the tiny Blue-gray Gnatcatchers with a buzzy, insect-like call.



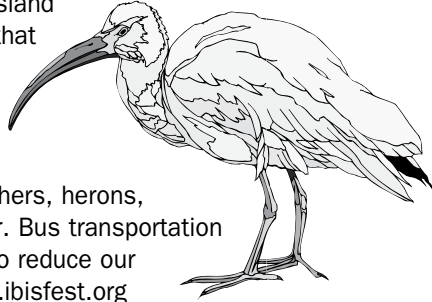
Our hummingbirds will be arriving soon or have arrived. Get out your feeders, clean them, and prepare your sugar water. Remember, four parts water to one part sugar. During April, our resident birds will be nesting (as I write this article, we have House Finches and Eastern Bluebirds with eggs) and they may be eating less food. As their eggs hatch and the chicks fledge however, they will be visiting your feeders more often.

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.

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. 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!

Ibis Fest

Ibis Fest: Cape Fear Audubon Society and the City of Southport are sponsoring Ibis Fest, May 12–16, 2009, a 5-day festival celebrating the rich biological diversity and history of the Lower Cape Fear. Southport is an ideal destination for both birders and nonbirders. Field trips to see endangered birds and plants, boat and kayak trips, workshops on photography, shrimping, nature writing, birding basics are a few of the activities offered. This is the first-ever event to celebrate the annual return of white ibis to Audubon's Battery Island Sanctuary. Breeding birds that may be seen include red-cockaded woodpecker, painting bunting, many shorebirds, including royal and least terns, oystercatchers, herons, egrets, and Wilson's plover. Bus transportation is provided for most trips to reduce our carbon footprint. Visit www.ibisfest.org



Adopt A Highway

by Phil Johnson



Cold [40], yet, no wind; and only light rain, thank goodness. My heart goes out to the dauntless Martha and Roy Girolami., Patsy Bailey; John Suhrbier, and Tiger Tom Driscoll. We

have done many a cleanup [4/yr] x how many yrs, I do not recollect..... ??? These people really deserve recognition, somehow, PLEASE!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I mean, the weather this AM was not very ???????? Next cleanup, June 13 ticks should be aplenty.

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Upcoming New Hope Audubon Society Membership Meeting

On May 7, 2009, Chris Liloia will discuss "Gardening with Drought Resistant Plants". Chris will have lots of good information on native plants that birds and other fauna use and need. Chris works at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens.

As always, the meetings are held at the Totten Center at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens in Chapel Hill and begin at 7:00 p.m. with conversation and refreshments. We have chapter business at 7:20 p.m. and the presentation usually starts around 7:45 p.m. Please note that there is construction at the gardens, so parking is temporarily behind the Totten Center. To reach this parking, go east on Manning Dr. from Hwy. 15-501. Go one block and turn left on Coker. Go one more block and turn left onto Laurel Hill street and go about one more block to the parking lot entrance on the left. There is a path from the parking lot that leads to a back door of the Totten Center. Everyone (especially nonmembers) are welcome! Please contact Tom Driscoll (btdriscoll@bellsouth.net) if you have any questions or need additional information.

New Hope Audubon Society Activities Calendar

Saturday May 2 **Bird Walk** at Duke Gardens with Cynthia Fox. Meet at Gardens parking lot at 7:55 a.m.

Saturday May 2 **Stream Watch** with John Kent 9:00 a.m.

Thursday May 7 **Membership Meeting at the NC Botanical Gardens** Totten Center 7:00 p.m. The speaker will be Chris Liloia who will discuss "Gardening with Drought Resistant Plants".

Friday May 15-17 Cynthia Fox will lead a **bird trip to Asheville**. Please contact her at (919) 933-2030 for more information.

Sunday May 17 Tom Driscoll will lead a **field trip to look for migrants** that have just returned from the south climes. Meet at the Mardi Gras bowling alley at 7:00 a.m. The walk lasts about 3 hours and will not be strenuous. Bring water and bug repellent and long pants. Please email Tom at btdriscoll@bellsouth.net if you intend to go on the trip.

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

Common Birds in Decline

from the Audubon website at <http://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/cbid/>

What's happening to birds we know and love?



Audubon's unprecedented analysis of forty years of citizen-science bird population data from our own Christmas Bird Count plus the Breeding Bird Survey reveals the alarming decline of many of our most common and beloved birds.

Since 1967 the average population of the common birds in steepest decline has fallen by 68 percent; some individual species nose-dived as much as 80 percent. All 20 birds on the national Common Birds in Decline list lost at least half their populations in just four decades.

The findings point to serious problems with both local habitats and national environmental trends. Only citizen action can make a difference for the birds and the state of our future.

Which Species? Why?

The wide variety of birds affected is reason for concern. Populations of meadowlarks and other farmland birds are diving because of suburban sprawl, industrial development, and the intensification of farming over the past 50 years.

Greater Scaup and other tundra-breeding birds are succumbing to dramatic changes to their breeding habitat as the permafrost melts earlier and more temperate predators move north in a likely response to global warming. Boreal forest birds like the Boreal Chickadee face deforestation from increased insect outbreaks and fire, as well as excessive logging, drilling, and mining.

The one distinction these common species share is the potential to become uncommon unless we all take action to protect them and their habitat. Browse the species and learn what you can do to help.



State of the Birds

from the Audubon website at <http://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/>

Birds are important indicators of the overall health of our environment. Like the proverbial canaries in the coal mine, they send an urgent warning about threats to our water, air, natural resources, climate and more.

Audubon's State of the Birds reports provide a picture of how the continental U.S.' birds — both common and rare — are faring. They bring together population data from our Christmas Bird Count — the longest running wildlife census in the world, the U.S. Geological Survey's Breeding Bird Survey and other wildlife and habitat research to highlight population declines and explore the threats behind them. A new series of State of the Birds analyses is being launched with June 2007's Common Birds in Decline. Other's will add to the picture periodically. Both new and archived reports are provided below to offer an ongoing picture of the State of the Birds.

How Citizen Science Revealed the Problem

from the Audubon website at <http://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/cbid/citizenScience.php>

For the first time ever, this analysis combined data from the world's longest-running uninterrupted bird census — Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) — with information from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) to study how populations of all common North American species routinely encountered in these surveys have fared during the past 40 years. The CBC data are the product of swarms of volunteers — citizen scientists — who counted birds every winter over this period and submitted their reports to Audubon. The BBS is a standardized morning count of birds along roadsides organized by the U.S. Geological Survey and conducted by volunteers from May into July.

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