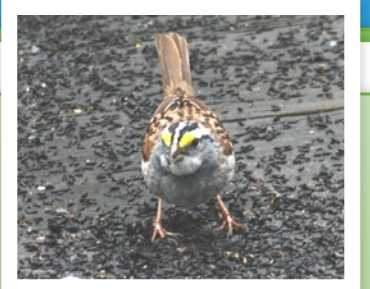


New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

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Bluebird Day at Brightleaf at the Park

By Steve Buczynski

As the sun rose on a glorious Saturday morning, February 26th, 2011, Pearl was whipping up some fine blueberry pancakes to lure Tom, Norm, and Bo to the far eastern edge of Durham County to help kick off Brightleaf at the Park's Bluebird day! Energized by the pancakes, blueberries, maple syrup, fresh whipped cream, and Chinese green tea, the New Hope Audubon Society trio set out to prepare for a day of hard work, education, and good fun. The Brightleaf Resource Advisory Committee hosted a day of Bluebird related activities beginning with a slide show about Bluebird habitat, nesting, and feeding presented by Tom Driscoll of the New Hope Audubon Society (NHAS). Also lending their expertise and sharing their love of nature were Tom's compatriots Norm Budnitz and Bo Howes, NHAS President and Vice-President. Tom's presentation included a show n' tell which included actual bluebird nests and unhatched eggs that he collected, bird identification guide books, and a wood duck nest box.

Following the slide show, participants had the option to purchase Bluebird nest boxes that Tom brought along or they built their own Bluebird nest box! Brightleaf resident Geoffrey Phillippe lent his wood craftsmanship to the cause and cut 10 bluebird nest box kits for bird fanatics to build themselves. Several folks took the nest box challenge and enjoyed the brisk sunny spring day building their own nest box with the assistance of Geoffrey Phillippe and Jeff Hill. As we were building the nest boxes, several bluebirds were taking in the action and cheering us on from nearby tree branches and light posts anxiously awaiting their new homes!

Riding the wave of the day's excitement, Steve, Tom, and Bo set up a Wood duck box down along Lick Creek. Later, Steve, Pearl, Tammy and Jeff mounted 3 Bluebird nest boxes around the Brightleaf Community in locations favorable for bluebirds. And so the sun shined, the bluebirds sang, the wood ducks whistled, and many Brightleaf residents enjoyed a spectacular day!

Many thanks to Tom, Norm, and Bo....
You really made our day special!



My First Real ID

*A personal Triumph in More
Ways Than One by Norm Budnitz*

I was 15 years old. A bookish kid. A bit of a late bloomer. I played sports with some skill, but I did not always make the A-team at camp in New Hampshire. What I knew about the outdoors I had gleaned from the camp nature counselors—a gentle, warm, elderly couple, Kaye and Al. Al used to take two or three of us out before breakfast on bird walks (a real treat, sort of breaking the rules). He'd show us some gems like Common Yellowthroats in the tangles along the camp road and nesting American Redstarts along a small stream you could step across without jumping. These were beautiful birds, but they weren't 'mine.' They 'belonged' to Al, and he shared them with me.

Let me back up for a moment. I got interested in birds when my parents put up a bird feeder in our yard in Massachusetts a couple of years earlier. We had Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, even Cardinals before they were common in New England. And of course, we had Robins, Crows, and other such 'easy' birds in our yard. And when I showed interest in these feathery critters, my parents suggested to a couple of family friends that they might want to get me a pair of binoculars for my bar mitzvah. These were giant, 7 X 50, Porroprism bins that weighed about as much as I did. And I loved them. I could sit for hours watching the birds at the feeder with my new toy. But again, those birds weren't mine. They were easy. Everyone knew what they were. Even people who could barely tell a bird from a fish.



My First Real ID continued from page one

Back to New Hampshire. We had a camp crafts counselor, Dave, who used to take us on short hikes around the camp grounds. He was preparing us for a day hike up and down Mount Eisenhower, a small mountain nearby. We climbed that mountain, and on the descent, we gorged ourselves on wild blueberries. I made a basket out of my T-shirt and hauled as many berries as I could down the mountain for my bunk mates. Didn't break a single berry, I'm proud to say. That T-shirt remained unscathed. (If my mother had only known!) Dave also taught us how to make a bed roll, build a fire, boil water, and all those good things that were a mystery to us kids who all lived in residential neighborhoods with mowed lawns and window boxes filled with pansies and geraniums.

Dave was setting us up for the 'big overnight trip up Mount Liberty. And what a climb it was. The lower part of the trail ran along the 'Flume,' a noisy, rushing, mountain stream that tumbled over glacial rocks amid the laurels, maples, and deep blue forget-me-nots. Eventually, as we climbed, the stream narrowed, became a trickle, and then disappeared altogether. And it was quiet, except for our footsteps and the clanking of our metal canteens, wrapped in their musty-smelling insulated canvas wrappers. And the trail got steeper. And our packs got heavier. And we got hungrier. And we wondered after we took each step, whether we could actually take another.

Suddenly, we broke into a small clearing and, a sight for sore eyes, a lean-to. It had been trashed a bit by previous campers, but it was 'home.' We threw off our packs and savored the rest of the righteously weary.

We policed the area, set up our bed rolls, and cooked the best dinner that any of us had ever eaten in our whole lives—hot dogs and beans, I think, and until that moment I had always hated hot dogs. Still do, in fact, but for that meal, heaven right here on earth. It was still light after dinner, and everyone wanted to sit around and nurse their aching feet. We were going to wait until morning and finish the climb to the top of the mountain for sunrise. But I wanted some alone time and got permission from Dave to go up the trail by myself. So up I went. The trees were now conifers. The trail was covered with spruce and fir needles and soft, soft green moss. The slight breeze died to still air. The voices of the other kids grew distant and then were gone. The world was hush. Hush. And then, I heard the sweetest, clearest song I had ever heard in my life. It was loud because it was close, but it wasn't piercing. It was slow, but it wasn't mournful. It was the only sound to be heard, and it consumed my whole being. And it came from a small brown bird, whose white throat was just visible in the waning light of dusk. "Poor Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody." That little, brown, silhouette of a bird, sitting on the tip top of a spruce, threw its head back, raised its beak to the sky, and let it out again, "Poor Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody."

I didn't know what that little bird was, but I knew that I was being treated to something very special. The song was not for me, but I was able to share in its beauty. In my teenage thirst, I wanted to put a name on the little fellow, to help me carry the moment into the future. After a minute or so, the dusk began to darken, the bird stopped singing, and my heart began to race a bit as I realized that I had better get back to the group. Quickly and deliberately, I worked my way down the trail to the lean-to. I ran to Dave and described what had happened and begged him to tell me what that bird was called. I am forever indebted to him for his compassion. He was not a birder, and he had no idea what the bird was. But he did not laugh at me or brush me off. He listened carefully to my description, acknowledged the depth of my emotion, and promised me that he would help me find my answer.

The stars were gorgeous that night.

The next day, after we trudged down the trail, drove back to camp, stowed all our grimy gear, and cleaned off with a swim in the lake, Dave took me aside and showed me a copy of Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds. It took a while, because I started at the beginning, but I finally found my bird toward the back of the book. There it was, a White-throated Sparrow. Frankly, the painting didn't do it justice. But it did what I wanted it to do. It gave me a name for my bird. It gave me an anchor for my experience. Even today, when I hear that plaintive song, I remember that the young kid who had barely gone beyond his own yard at home, had now climbed a mountain aptly named Liberty, had slept on the ground, had experienced a transcendent moment, and all by himself had identified 'his' first bird.

Eagle Count by Martha Girolami, Chair

During the NHAS Bald Eagle Count on Sunday, April 10, 2011 from 7 to 8:30 am, 32 Bald Eagles were observed by 4 teams on Lake Jordan. Eight observers counted 19 adult, 12 immature and 1 indeterminate eagles. There maybe a report or two outstanding so these totals are not final. The day was slightly foggy and overcast and visibility was poor to average. The temperature was in the low 50's and the breeze was 5-10 mph.



Boy Scout Merit Badge Day

The New Hope Audubon Society will be working with North Carolina State Parks and the Occonechee Boy Scout Council - Orange District to host a Boy Scout Merit Badge Day or Pow Wow. The Pow Wow will be held at Jordan Lake State Park Visitor's Center, 280 State Park Road, just off US64, Apex, NC, 27523 on Saturday, May 14th, 2011 from 9am until 3pm.

The Pow Wow will offer Scouts five (5) different Merit Badges to choose from: Bird Study, Environmental Science, Insect Study, Mammal Study and Reptile and Amphibian Study. Any Scout who attends the Pow Wow, brings the required pre-requisites to the Merit Badge Session and successfully completes all the requirements with the Merit Badge Counselor the day of Pow Wow, will earn the selected Merit Badge.

We are seeking volunteers with expertise in these subjects to teach or assist with the completion of the merit badges. If you are interested, even if you can't stay the entire time, please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com.

Elections May 5, 2011

The following slate of officers was presented by the NHAS Nominating Committee at our last monthly meeting, April 7, 2011. Other nominations may be presented from the floor at our Annual Meeting, 7:00 PM, May 5, 2011, at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens Visitor Education Center at 100 Old Mason Farm Road in Chapel Hill. We will then vote on all proposed nominations

President - Norm Budnitz	
Vice President - Bo Howes	Director - Robin Moran
Secretary - Pat Reid	Director - John Kent
Treasurer - Jill Paul	Director - Steve Foster

During the past year, the Board of Directors of New Hope Audubon Society (NHAS) has been working on revisions to our by-laws. The last revision was done in 1989, and there were a number of changes that needed to be made. The Board has passed a resolution to present the amended by-laws to the membership at large. In order for these changes to be put in place, the members of NHAS must vote on the amended document at this Annual Meeting.

So please join us and let your votes be counted for our new officers and our amended by-laws.

ADOPT A HIGHWAY PROGRAM

by Tom Driscoll

Once per calendar quarter, we gather to pick up the trash on the road and the next clean up is scheduled for Saturday, June 25, 2011 at 7:30am. The Adopt-a-Highway program is one of the many programs sponsored by your New Hope Audubon Society. In this case, we have "adopted" Stagecoach Road which is located in the southeastern corner of Durham County, near Chatham and Orange Counties. The road is bounded by Ferrington Rd. and Highway 751. We meet in the parking lot nearer to Highway 751.

I have trash bags and orange day-glow vests for visibility. I also have "grabbers" that enable one to pick up the trash without too much bending over! Please bring gloves, long pants, insect spray, and sturdy shoes. This activity is not strenuous and should take 2 to 3 hours. However, if you only have one hour to spare, we could still use you! Note that I found a \$10 bill during one of our trash pickups.

If you are interested in participating, then please show up at the parking lot along Stagecoach Road and contact me at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com. You'll have fun and make a positive contribution to our environment. See you there!



FEEDER WATCH

By Tom Driscoll
Are we feeding Hawks?



You should be receiving this newsletter in early May. Before we go any further, I want to recount a very recent observation. I was watching some birds at my feeders in the back yard when suddenly a Cooper's Hawk flew quickly over my house (unseen by me or the birds). She swooped down and snatched a Pine Siskin. She then proceeded to the fence at the edge of my backyard and ate the bird (see photo). When we feed birds, we may be inadvertently feeding the hawks that eat birds, as well. Although I regret that a Pine Siskin (a rare bird for here) was eaten, I believe that when we feed birds we may be setting them up for "bird hawks". Do you have similar stories? If so, send them in and I will put them in this column.

Finally, the flowers and trees are blooming and budding out. Our winter visitors, like the juncos and the White-throated Sparrows, will be leaving soon, but they are still here now. I am still putting millet on the ground for these birds. There are still Pine Siskins at my feeders and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Pine Siskins often accompany goldfinches when in the area. These birds will be migrating north sometime in April or early May. Our resident birds are molting into their breeding colors. Have you noticed that the goldfinches are getting more yellow every day? Our summer visitors are already arriving. I have heard or seen Wood Thrushes, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and Yellow-throated Warblers. Although these are not feeder birds, you may hear or see them in your yard. Can you recognize birds that aren't regulars at your feeders? If you watch and listen, you can see and hear your cardinals, chickadees, and titmice. They have common calls and if you recognize them easily, then you may be able to tell when different birds, such as migrants, come to your yard. The New Hope Audubon Society just concluded a bird identification class that was well-received. If you are interested in learning more about bird identification, then keep an eye out for a notice of the next class; we will probably teach it in early 2012.

Our hummingbirds will be arriving soon or have arrived. Get out your feeders, clean them, and prepare your sugar water. Remember, four parts water to one part sugar. During April, our resident birds will be nesting (as I write this article, we have House Finches and Eastern Bluebirds with eggs) and they may be eating less food. As their eggs hatch and the chicks fledge however, they will be visiting your feeders more often. Have you seen orioles (orange and black) or tanagers (red like cardinals, but without a crest)? If so, then putting out pieces of oranges may attract these birds. If you are not sure what birds you are seeing, email me with descriptions or, even better, buy a bird guide and learn to identify your feeder birds. During this month, the Rose-breasted Grosbeaks will be migrating through our area. The males are very attractive birds that are black and white with a pinkish chest. These birds will stop at feeders with black sunflower seed. Also, Indigo Buntings (the males are all blue) will sometimes stop at feeders.

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. Contact me if you want one, complete with free delivery! Note that other birds, such as titmice and chickadees, will use these boxes as well.

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 sptrdrshnk@yahoo.com. 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!



Calendar of Activities

Thursday, May 5, **Membership Meeting** at NC Botanical Gardens. 7:00pm The speaker will be Jessica Vorzinski on "Through their Eyes: Mate Choice in Pea Fowl"



Saturday, May 7, **Stream Watch** with John Kent 9:00am.

Saturday, May 28, 2011. **Field Trip** led by Tom Driscoll Please meet at the Mardi Gras bowling alley (southeast corner of Hwy. 54 and Fearington Rd. intersection) parking lot at 7:00am. The field will last about 3 hours and we will go to a local site to look for birds and butterflies. The hiking will be leisurely. Please bring sturdy shoes, water and snacks (if you choose), insect repellent, and long pants. If you plan to attend or have questions, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrshnk@yahoo.com.

Saturday, June 4, **Stream Watch** with John Kent. 9:00 am.

Floating Islands by Rob Crook

Quietly, the Blue Heron stood on the edge of the bank not moving at all. Then its neck snapped down in a gray blue blur to snatch a fish from the water. With a couple of flips the fish was tossed into the air until it slid head first down into the big bird's beak. It was a pretty typical day for the two species, although an unfortunate interaction for the fish, but one that has occurred millions of times between the two animal species. The only difference between this latest incident of Aviany CSI and all the others that took place before is that the Heron was standing on a manmade island that was floating in the middle of a Carrboro Stormwater detention basin rather than the bank of the pond or wading through shallows.

The island is made by Floating Island Southeast which manufactures the Biohaven™ Floating Treatment Wetland for in North and South Carolina and Virginia. It is made from 100% post consumer recycled PE plastic that is extruded into a non-woven matrix. Think - spider web mass of plastic fibers or a really big scrubby kitchen sponge floating in the water. The top of the island has a bunch of holes drilled into it where plant plugs can be inserted during planting of the island. Once the island is launched the plants will take three or four days to grow their roots firmly into the water; if I can use the word firm for roots that grow directly into water. Kidding aside, the plants will then grow normally, much like in a hydroponic system, to attain a normal height and diameter. Once the plants are established they last for a very long time even through the hottest parts of the summer as they are always being watered from below.



With the vegetation and productivity of the island, other things develop on the island naturally as in any other ecosystem. Insects come to investigate the plants and the ecosystem of the island, fish start to feed on the roots of the plants below the island and also on the insects that drop into the water. Turtles come to bask on the island. And birds of all types soon follow.

The most common bird species I see on the islands are Canada Geese, mallards, the Great Blue Heron and numerous other songbirds. Smaller song birds will fly out to the islands to see what is out there and rest on a plant's stalk or a flower before resuming their travels. So the islands really do serve as a new habitat and oasis for the birds that are found in our area. With a little imagination it would be an easy thing to tailor specific birdhouses for the islands also to try and attract more species to live there. Also it serves as a safe habitat for the birds as land based predators cannot approach the islands. This makes the islands a place where birds and people can enjoy the islands.



New Hope Audubon Officers for 2010-2011

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President	Norm Budnitz	919-383-0553	nbudnitz@gmail.com
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Treasurer	Maxine Foster	919-294-8878	mafoster92@gmail.com
Director	Robin Moran	919-383-3514	robomo@earthlink.com
Director	John Kent	919-933-5650	jjkent25@gmail.com
Director	Steve Foster	919-294-8878	sfoster239@gmail.com

Committee Chairs and Special Projects

Conservation Chair	Vacant		
Education Chair	Vacant		
Field Trip Chair	Vacant		
Hospitality Chair	Martha Girolami	919-362-5759	mgirolami@mac.com
Membership Chair	Tom Driscoll	919-932-7966	spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com
Program Chair	Steve Foster	919-294-8878	sfoster239@gmail.com
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Important Bird Areas: Jordan Lake Chair	Robert "Bo" Howes	919-370-3202	rchowes007@hotmail.com
Stream Watch	John Kent	919-933-5650	jjkent@gmail.com
Wildathon Chair	Tom Driscoll	919-932-7966	spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com