

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

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North Carolina Botanical Garden - Garden of Wonder Bird Blind

By Tom Driscoll

The North Carolina Botanical Garden is beginning a project to design and establish a permanent garden area for children. As part of the garden, they want to build a bird blind so children (and parents) can watch birds at feeders. Although the New Hope Audubon Society provided funds to build the bird blind and buy the bird feeders, we are also working with Dave Ringenburg to build the bird blind. Here is a recent article in the North Carolina Botanical Garden newsletter:

Thanks to a recent generous contribution from the [New Hope Audubon Society](#), we have now embarked on developing a "bird garden" section to the Wonder Garden. We are thrilled with this partnership with our friends at New Hope Audubon, who have donated funds with which to purchase bird feeders, seed, and building materials as well muscle power and expertise for building a "bird blind" where young nature explorers will soon observe



bird activity while themselves hidden from view. Last weekend, volunteers from New Hope Audubon, and others, built the framework for the structure.



As you can see from the photos, it has been framed. However, we still have some work to do. If you are handy with a hammer or would like to make a financial contribution to this effort, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com.



In Search of Kiwis PT II *by Norm Budnitz*

About a week after our grueling but wonderful search for North Island Brown Kiwis in Kerikeri, New Zealand (see the article in the November/December, 2011, newsletter), our intrepid crew set out in search of another kiwi species—the Okarito Brown Kiwi. This species only lives in a small region on the western side of New Zealand's South Island. Our expedition proved to be a remarkably different experience.

The day before our Okarito adventure, we went out on a morning pelagic seabird tour out of Kaikoura on the east coast of South Island. Within about 15 minutes of leaving shore, our small boat was being followed by pelagic birds galore. The captain hung a wire cage filled with frozen fish parts off the stern and slowed the boat to a crawl. In no time at all, there were half a dozen species of albatrosses, two species of giant-petrels, four species of gadfly petrels, and six species of shearwaters. The birds were so close, it was difficult to get



In Search of Kiwis Pt II Continued

a whole albatross in the frame of the camera. But it was easy to get head shots that showed the intricacies of their plumage and the glint in the deep, dark eyes.



On the boat with my three British friends and me were several other people. Two of them were a fiftyish couple, and the husband was wearing a black eye patch. He had a tendency to lurch around the boat, which I at first attributed to his vision problems until he knocked into me and I caught a distinct odor of alcohol. Ah, well. From then on, I kept clear of him for my own safety and kept my eye on him for his safety. Luckily, there were no further problems. At least, not right then.

After our boat ride, we hopped in our car and set out on our six-hour drive across South Island to Okarito. We got settled into our cabin and set off to meet our guide, Ian Cooper at Okarito Kiwi Tours. When we arrived at his house/office, there were several other couples there, including our one-eyed man and his wife. I had a sense of foreboding, but let it pass with a sigh (inaudible, I hope).

Ian proceeded to give us our instructions. This was not Kerikeri. Our every move tonight was choreographed. We must walk single file. We must not talk. If we were to see a kiwi, we must not point or shout out. Some of us would be given headlamps that we must not use unless specifically told to do so. If we had on “noisy” clothes, we had to make a change before we started our hike. We must wear our safety vests. We must do this; we must do that. This was not Kerikeri! After Ian was satisfied that we understood our instructions, we hopped into his van and drove a few miles to the forest.

Okarito Brown Kiwis are, indeed, rare birds. They are forest birds, and much of their habitat has been destroyed. But even where there is good habitat, the birds are thoroughly man-

aged for their own protection. Unfortunately for these flightless birds that never had *any* mammals to deal with until humans arrived in New Zealand, they are now subject to severe predation by Australian opossums and European stoats (weasels). If these mammals don't eat the adults, they certainly eat their eggs or chicks. Therefore, in this Okarito nature reserve, the kiwis are intensively managed by their human protectors. Every bird is banded and about half of them wear radio transmitters. Every nest is monitored. Immediately after the female lays her single large egg, it is taken away and put in an incubator. Kiwis only lay one egg, and in relation to her body size, it is the largest egg on Earth. So females only lay one egg a year, and in Okarito, it is taken away. The reason is that if it were left in the nest, it almost certainly would not survive. Once it hatches, the chick is raised in captivity until it is old enough and large enough, and it is then released back in the forest near its original home.

To the forest trail we went. Single file. No talking. No swishing clothes. Ian carrying his Yagi antenna and earphones, listening for the signal from our first bird. At one point, he asked us to stop and went on ahead. When he came back he announced that our target bird was in his regular roost site, a burrow under a fallen log. The plan: We will move silently to the specific spot on the trail that should afford us the best view when the bird emerged from his burrow at dusk. We must not talk; we must not point; we must not shout out, “There he is.” Oh, and by the way. There are three camp chairs hidden just off the trail here. Let's grab them.

So we grabbed the chairs and walked silently to the special spot. We unfolded the chairs, and Ian assigned three shorter people to sit in them. He then positioned the rest of us, staggered behind the sitters in such a way that we all had a view of the spot where the kiwi should emerge. And we waited. And waited.



In Search of Kiwis Pt II Continued

And dusk began to settle in. And we waited. A little darker. And then there he was. The kiwi emerged from his burrow and . . . “There he is,” shouted the one-eyed man, pointing his arm like thrusting a spear. And the kiwi was gone.

About half of us actually saw the bird for a split second. The rest may have seen a wisp of motion. All of us gasped. Mr. One-Eye was oblivious. *He* had seen the bird.

Ian was so shocked, he didn't speak for a very long time. Finally, he said that we should move on and see if we could find another kiwi. So on we went. Single file. In silence. Each of us in our own thoughts. Ian leading with his Yagi, listening for another kiwi with a transmitter. We walked. And we walked. And we stopped and listened. And we walked. We heard a Morepork Owl in the distance, but no kiwis.

As we walked in our single file, I noticed up ahead that Mr. One-Eye was staggering a bit. Off to the left sometimes. Then off to the right. And then he belched loudly. And then another loud sound from a different orifice. Eventually, we stopped again when Ian picked up a signal, and he took each one of us by the arm and positioned us in particular places along the trail. Unfortunately, Mr. One-Eye was placed far enough away from his wife that he couldn't see her. We then stood quietly. And waited and waited. Suddenly our man let out a loud “Whoop.” His wife ran down the line to him and shut him up.

And we walked. And walked. And walked. The people who had not seen the first bird were in front while the rest of us followed along close behind. Mr. One-Eye was at the end of the line with his wife just in front of him to keep him under control. The night was cool but not cold. The stars were brilliant in the dark southern sky. The Clouds of Magellan were glowing in their eerie but somehow comforting light. And then she appeared. In the path straight ahead of us. A single kiwi, shuffling along, head pointed down, sniffing for a potentially hapless worm or beetle. We all froze in our steps, lifted our binoculars, and watched her in the starlight as she moved about. Beautiful.

Our man didn't stop and bumped into his wife, but she cushioned his blow so there was no noise. And then the kiwi sidled off into the forest, and it was time to go home.



Property Owners Can Play a Key Role in Conservation and Save themselves Some Money Too.

By Jae Furman, Conservation Chair

Conservation Easements provide landowners and businesses a way to take an active role in environmental and wildlife conservation. North Carolina is one of the most progressive states with regards to conservation easements. When a landowner donates an easement to a qualified recipient such as a state or local government, or an eligible non-profit organization, the landowner qualifies for tax credits equaling 25% of the value of the property up to \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for married couples and corporations while continuing to own, and in many cases use the land. In addition to the state tax credit, the U.S. government offers a tax credit of up to 30% of the value of the land. There is also an estate tax benefit of 40% up to a maximum of land value of \$500,000 for a property with a conservation easement. There are certain public benefits the property must offer, such as watershed protection, fish, wildlife or farmland conservation, public access to public trails, beaches, or water, or other similar uses.

Conservation easements are determined on a case-by-case basis, allowing an opportunity for a property owner to create an agreement that fulfills particular needs and wishes.

More information about conservation easements for our area can be obtained from the following sources:

North Carolina Conservation Tax Credit Program
North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Eno River Association
Triangle Land Conservancy

Another type of conservation easement is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Through a specific conservation agreement with the state of North Carolina, this program works to rescue environmentally sensitive farmland located near streams or other approved water bodies for a specified period of time. Landowners receive annual payments and are reimbursed for establishing the conservation practices. With some agreements, landowners also receive a one-time state incentive payment and may also be eligible to receive a tax incentive.

For more information on CREP, contact the North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Water Conservation.



NHAS on Twitter



Ever wonder where you can get news on sightings of rare birds, bird-related activities in our area, conservation updates, videos, cool applications and devices for hiking and bird watching, all in one place? Visiting our Twitter page might be the place to go. In addition to our tweets on local (North Carolina) events and news, we also try to include relevant national and international news and stories. If you would like tweets sent automatically to your desktop or smart phone, you can elect to "follow us" on twitter. In addition, we now have a Twitter feed on our home page so you can check the latest news there too.

If you have any questions or information you would like to share on Twitter, please contact Jae Furman at OutdoorsEvents@gmail.com.



New Hope Audubon Society Membership Meeting Presentations for January- and February 2012

Our speaker for the January 5, 2012 meeting is Heather Starcke, Executive Director of Audubon North Carolina. She will discuss her work on Butterflies in Costa Rica. She will probably also give us an update on Audubon North Carolina activities. Our speaker for the February 2, 2012 meeting is Lincoln Pratson from Duke University. His topic is Extracting Natural Gas Using Fracking. This is a very timely topic for the piedmont. Our speaker for the March 1, 2012 meeting is Rachel Grindstaff. She will discuss the Salamanders of Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee.

Our membership meetings are held at the Education Building at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens (on the north side very near the parking lots) on the first Thursday of every month. The gardens are on Highway 15-501 at the intersection of Old Mason Farm Road. There is easy parking very close to the new building. The meetings start at 7pm with refreshments, chatting with friends, and meeting visitors or new members. There is chapter business until 7:15 or so when the presentations begin. Most of the presentations last 45 minutes to one hour. Everyone, even non-members, is welcome! See you at the next meeting!

Upcoming Field Trips

By Tom Driscoll

On Sunday, January 22, 2012, we will be going to Butner Gamelands. We should see many winter birds including Winter Wrens, White-throated, Field, Song, Savannah, Chipping, and Fox Sparrows, and other birds. We have a chance to see some ducks and eagles, as well. We meet at 1pm at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at the intersection of Highway 54 and Ferringington Road.

On Sunday, February 26, 2012, we will be going to Kerr Lake to look for loons and other water birds. Red-throated Loons have been seen there annually for the past few years and a Pacific Loon was seen there several years ago. Common Loons are seen there annually as well. We may also see other water fowl too. We will meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at the intersection of Highway 54 and Ferringington Road at 8:00am. We will either eat lunch at picnic tables or at a nearby restaurant, depending on the weather. We should return before 3pm.

On Saturday, March 24, 2012, we will be birdwatching at a site to be determined. Please meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley Bowling Alley parking lot at the intersection of Highway 54 and Ferringington Road at 8am.

For all of these bird walks, the hiking will be easy. Bring sturdy shoes, water, and snacks, if you want. Bird-watchers of all skill levels are welcome. If you plan to attend, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrshnk@yahoo.com.



Getting to Know You

By Jae Furman

Being a person who has trouble associating names with faces, forgets directions, or has trouble distinguishing between a long-leaf pine and short-leaf pine, I was a little skeptical about joining an organization where a working knowledge of birds seemed to be a fundamental requirement. Upon moving into my new country home a couple of years ago, I noticed an extraordinary variety of birds and birdsongs while hanging out around my front and back yards. If this plethora of wildlife in my very own yard wasn't enough to astonish, my first walk through the woods on a trail out back of my property introduced me to a haven of what sounded like, thousands of birds at a bird party, the kind of party where everyone needs to keep talking louder and louder because of all the conversations going at one time. The sound was almost deafening, albeit, in a very pleasant way.

I must admit that although I am a lifelong lover of nature, the outdoors, sustainable farming, living practices, and so forth, I never really attempted to get to know most of the birds I've encountered, mostly because of that name association deficiency of mine, but also because the thought of learning the names of hundreds or even thousands of birds who many times differed from each other by as little as a neck feather was daunting enough to send even an environmentalist like me running for cover.

But there was something about these beautiful winged creatures, their songs, and their personalities, that continually pulled me into their world. If I may introduce an analogy; not being a great swimmer, my reluctance to take dips at a quarry near my childhood home kept me safely on my rock while others would be enjoying their swim. The rock wasn't bad, but the water just seemed so much more fun.

Well, back to my bird story. This past summer, I asked myself where to start. Looking up local bird clubs seemed like the right thing to do. To my pleasant surprise, there were two located in my own county. Next, I needed to get my feet wet. That meant attending meetings, getting to know people who knew birds, and maybe even offering to volunteer. So, here I am with the New Hope Audubon Society. Just as I expected, there are folks here who can recognize hundreds of birds by name without a moment's hesitation, who can take beautiful pictures of them perched or in flight, and who can write about them eloquently. What I didn't expect was how welcoming these folks would be to someone not quite as knowledgeable about these beautiful winged creatures, and how comfortable they would be sharing their knowledge and taking me under their wing, if you will pardon the expression.

So in addition to a group of experts, with supernatural powers, I think I have found a group of teachers. I too hope to be able to teach about birds someday, possibly to others who like me, are sometimes reluctant to jump in the water.

BIRDS AND BIRDING COURSE

Our Birds and Birding Course was such a success last winter, we are offering it again this winter. We will provide more details in early January, but here are the basics:

- Four consecutive Monday evenings, 7:30 to 9:00 pm, Feb. 20, Feb 27, Mar 5, Mar 12, plus a field trip (date to be determined) This class is for beginners of all ages. Topics will include: how to identify birds, what are birds (behavior, anatomy, physiology), birding optics, field guides, and more.
- Place: St. Thomas More Church in Chapel Hill. Price: \$50. If you would like to reserve your space or give a gift to a friend, you may go to our website and click on the "add to cart" button and make a payment using PayPal. If you do not have a PayPal account, you will be able to pay with a credit card. If you have questions, please contact us at newhopeaudubon@gmail.org



FEEDER WATCH

By Tom Driscoll

As the days get colder and shorter, birds are eating more and I have to refill feeders more frequently. For the past month or so, the feeding had abated some, but now the birds including the winter visitors are eating a lot! During the late summer and early fall, there is usually a lot of natural food available and fewer birds to compete with (the winter visitors have not arrived and the summer visitors have begun migration), so there may be less activity at your feeders.

Are your birds eating more now? Have your winter visitors all arrived yet? Some of the less common birds I have seen in my yard include Brown Creeper and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Be on the lookout for these winter visitor birds. There are also a few Baltimore Orioles wintering in our area. I also have some birds, such as Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Eastern Bluebirds, and Brown Creepers eating my suet. If you don't provide suet for your birds because the squirrels eat it, consider using the hot pepper suet. My squirrels avoid it! Sometimes, orioles and other birds will eat jelly, so you may want to consider putting out some jelly or using an oriole feeder. I also use more safflower seeds in the winter. They provide protein and the squirrels don't seem to like them. Do you use safflower seeds and, if so, do your birds like them? Some of the local bird food stores, such as the Wild Bird Center in Chapel Hill can show you these feeders.

Although you may have been feeding more birds, are you providing them with water? Most winters can be somewhat dry here. 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.

If you see one of the rare birds or want to recount another feeder story, then please contact me at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com. I would like to include some reader's bird feeding observations and stories, so please send me some.



Fun Bird Facts

By Jae Furman

Feathers of Indigo Buntings appear to change color. They do this because of special cells in their feather barbs that reflect certain colors depending on how the sun shines on them.

Much of what we know about the mechanisms of orientation and navigation in migratory birds was discovered in experiments involving Indigo Buntings.

More on the Indigo Bunting: http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/featured_birds/default.cfm?bird=Indigo_Bunting

If you have a fun bird fact, and you would like it to be mentioned here or on Twitter, send them along with your name to Jae Furman at: OutdoorEvents@gmail.com.

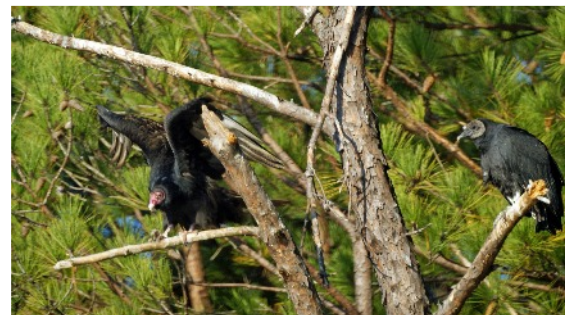
View more fun bird facts at [Twitter.com/newhope_audubon](https://twitter.com/newhope_audubon).



October 30, 2011, Bird Walk: Looking for Migrants

By Don McCormick

Tom Driscoll led a group of four members, including three experienced birders and one novice, on a walk to spot birds *en route* to seasonal homes and locals who plan to stay for the winter. We met at dawn at the Mardi Gras Lanes, then reassembled on the 751 bridge across Jordan Lake to investigate reports that a Franklin's Gull had been seen in the area. We didn't see the Franklin's, but there were Pied-Billed Grebes in abundance, several Great Blue Herons, Coots, one Laughing Gull, and several Horned Grebes.



We spotted several dozen vultures, a mix of Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures, both perched in trees and resting on the shore, and several Bald Eagles. Perhaps the most notable spotting of the morning was a Blackpoll Warbler, which stayed on its perch long enough for all of us, including the novice, to get a long, clear, unobstructed look at it. At least two of the participants commented that it was a life-list bird for them.





Calendar of Activities



Thursday, Jan 5, **Membership Meeting** at NC Botanical Gardens. 7:00pm The speaker will be Heather Starcke on "Butterflies of Costa Rica"

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

Sunday, Jan 8, **Eagle Count** with Martha Girolami, 7:00 am - 9:00 am.

Sunday Jan 22, **Field Trip** led by Tom Driscoll, we will be going to Butner Gamelands. We should see many winter birds including Winter Wrens, White-throated, Field, Song, Savannah, Chipping, and Fox Sparrows, and other birds. We have a chance to see some ducks and eagles, as well. We meet at 1pm at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at the intersection of Highway 54 and Fearington Road. If you plan to attend or have questions, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com

Thursday, Feb 3, **Membership Meeting** at NC Botanical Gardens 7:00pm The speaker will be Lincoln Pratson on "Extracting Natural Gas Using Fracking"

Saturday , Feb 5, **Stream Watch** with John Kent 9:00 am

Sunday, February 26, **Field Trip** led by Tom Driscoll, we will be going to Kerr Lake to look for loons and other water birds. Red-throated Loons have been seen there annually for the past few years and a Pacific Loon was seen there several years ago. Common Loons are seen there annually as well. We may also see other water fowl too. We will meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at the intersection of Highway 54 and Fearington Road at 8:00am. We will either eat lunch at picnic tables or at a nearby restaurant, depending on the weather. We should return before 3pm.

LAKE JORDAN BALD EAGLE COUNT ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2011

By Martha Girolami, Chair

This was not an ordinary count. More than 100 Bald Eagles were observed and many hundreds of Black Vultures. Especially in the northern part of the Lake on Morgan Creek, there were hundreds of dead fish and many eagles were seen feeding on exposed beaches.

The Lake was low and had been for several months before the count.. Low rainfall and high temperatures probably resulted in low oxygen levels that killed the fish who provided a feast for the scavengers.

In summary, 13 observers at 6 sites reported 55 adult, 59 immature and 3 undetermined Bald Eagles. The total is a record 117 Bald Eagles. There were about 30 undetermined eagles on distant beaches on the northern part of Morgan Creek which could not be seen well and are not included in the numbers reported by the six observation teams. The weather was in the 50's and mostly clear with a slight breeze.



New Hope Audubon Officers for 2011-2012

Position	Name	Phone	Email
President	Norm Budnitz	919-383-0553	nbudnitz@gmail.com
Vice President	Robert "Bo" Howes	919-370-3202	rchowes007@hotmail.com
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Treasurer	Jill Paul	919-933-0806	jillpaul@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

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Conservation Chair	Jae Furman	919 725-7070	OutdoorsEvents@gmail.com
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			
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Bird Seed Sale	Judy Murray	919-942-2985	jmurray@unc.edu
Eagle Count	Martha Girolami	919-362-5759	mgirolami@mac.com
Eagle Platform	Robert "Bo" Howes	919-370-3202	rchowes007@hotmail.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	jkent25@gmail.com
Wildathon Chair	Tom Driscoll	919-932-7966	spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com