

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

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<http://www.newhopeaudubon.org>



Bird Seed Sale Results

By

Mary George, Bird Seed Sale Coordinator

Many thanks go to all of you who purchased bird seed, suet and coffee or made donations this year to our annual bird seed sale. The sale netted \$3097.21 this year which will assist NHAS in pursuing our mission of promoting the conservation and enjoyment of birds and wildlife.

Thank you Robin Moran for your special effort in making sale forms available to your friends and colleagues which resulted in multiple orders. Also, thanks go to those members who helped on pick-up day loading cars and delivering seeds including Judy Murray, Norm Budnitz, Paç Timmins, Bo Howes, Jill Paul, Tom Driscoll, Mary George and Mark Kosiewski. Last but not least a huge thank you to Cynthia Fox of The Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center who has graciously supported this sale for the past nine years.

As new chair of the bird seed sale, I know Judy Murray's tireless effort and success in that position for the past many years is going to be a hard act to follow. Hopefully, the membership and community will continue to rally around in the years to come and we will have continued success with this important fund raising effort.

'Angry' Bird

By

Norm Budnitz



In years past, I had bird feeders positioned in various places around my deck. When something frightened the birds, they would quickly scatter in all directions. The problem was that one of those directions might be the sky the birds saw reflected in my windows. The birds that had jumped from more than a few feet away would sometimes hit the windows with enough force to be stunned or even killed. But in recent years, I have moved my bird feeders so that they all hang under the eaves of my house, within about a foot of my windows. As a result, I hardly get any lethal window strikes anymore, although I still get the occasional thump that wakes from my nap.

I have always been curious about what was frightening the birds. Sometimes the precipitating event has been obvious. When I hear the chickadees or titmice let out a very high, thin, slightly drawn out squeak, I know the birds will scatter or freeze in place. I then check the area for an Accipiter—a sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawk.



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Sometimes the hawk will oblige by sitting momentarily in the sugar maple next to the deck. Only rarely do I see the hawk make a kill.

Gusts of wind or falling leaves can also frighten the birds. This doesn't seem to happen when there are just one or two birds around, but when there are half a dozen or more, one nervous bird can set off the whole flock. All those eyes watching for unusual movements make for some flighty (so to speak) behavior.

Sometimes, the event that sets off the flock is totally obscure to my inquiring mind. It can be a bright, sunny day, calm and clear, mild temperature, middle of the day. The birds have been coming and going at what appears to be a leisurely pace. I'm watching with one eye, dozing with the other. The birds are feeding quietly. Suddenly, the whole group explodes into the air. Within less than a minute, they are back, feeding as usual. A passing cloud? A car starting up? A neighbor's horse whinnying? Who knows. Maybe one of the birds just had an itch! When these occasional fright flights occur, some of the birds bump into the windows. But as I noted above, they are usually so close to the windows that they don't seem to get hurt. But there goes my nap.

Enter the local mockingbird. For the two decades I have lived in this house, there has been at least one mockingbird in attendance. During the breeding season, I often see more than one, indicating that mockingbird procreation is occurring. But in winter, I usually only see one individual. I don't know *where* its mate has gone, but I have an idea *why* it is gone. Shortly after I moved into my house, I planted two deciduous holly trees (*Ilex decidua*). Unlike its cousin, the American holly (*Ilex opaca*), this deciduous variety has small, oval leaves that do not have sharp spikes. I like this, because it means I can walk barefoot near them without fear of bleeding profusely. Also unlike its cousin, this species is more of a shrub, and as its name implies, it drops its leaves every fall. This is perhaps the nicest trait of all. I have two female trees (yes, hollies come in males and females), which means that each winter they are covered with bright red berries. Not sprinkled with berries; covered with berries. I love them.

And so does my mockingbird. Woe be to any bird that lands in those hollies. Almost immediately it will be attacked by the mocker. He (I'll call him 'he,' though he could be a 'she.')

will fly into the tree and flush out the intruder. I've seen him chase known fruit eaters like Hermit Thrushes, Blue Jays, and Cedar Waxwings. The jays in particular can be quite persistent, but the mocker seems indomitable. I have watched him spend a whole morning chasing two or three jays, over and over again. Perhaps this is why his mate is nowhere to be found. Outside of the breeding season, perhaps his defense of his trees, his food resource, includes keeping his mate away as well.

So what does all this have to do with feeder birds hitting my windows? You probably thought I was just rambling and had forgotten where I started this story. But, no. There was a method to my madness. You see, this year there seems to be an almost constant patter of bumps and taps on my windows. The chickadees and titmice, the house and purple finches, the siskins—they come in to the feeders, and when their numbers reach a certain threshold, Mr. Mocker swoops in, wings and tail spread, flashing those bright white patches, and everyone scatters. I keep thinking that a hawk has come by, but it's the mockingbird. Though the holly trees are 20 to 25 feet away, apparently that's close enough. He simply cannot tolerate this invasion of his resource space, even by birds that do not eat his precious berries.

In he swoops, off they scatter. In he swoops, off they go. Over and over and over, all day long. And some of them thump against my windows. As I said, none of the thumpers seem to get hurt. And within seconds, the feeders are full of birds again. Until the next swoop.

I wish he would finish eating those berries so I could finish my nap.



Calendar of Activities



Thursday, Mar 7, **Membership Meeting** 7:00pm, NC Botanical Garden. The program will be "Birds of Kruger National Park, South Africa; Etosha National Park, Naimbia; and Nairobi National Park, Kenya" with Maria de Bruyn

Thursday, Apr 4, **Membership Meeting** 7:00pm, NC Botanical Garden. The program will be "Snakes of North Carolina" with Jeff Beane of NC Museum of Natural Sciences

Saturday, Apr 6, **Stream Watch** with John Kent, 9:00 am

Sunday, Apr 14, **Eagle Count** at Jordan Lake, Steve McMurray. Coordinator.

Eagle Count by Steve McMurray

The NHAS Jordan Lake Bald Eagle count took place on Sunday, January 13, 2013, from 7 to 8:30 am. The temperature was moderate in the low 50s, very nice for January but visibility was very poor. A thick blanket of fog covered the lake making it extremely difficult for viewing. Six out of eighteen sites were monitored around the lake by eleven observers. Only one eagle was observed at the observation deck. Lake level was just below normal at 215.62 and the water temperature at 52 degrees. If you would like to participate on the next count on April 14, 2013, please contact Steve McMurray at steve.mcmurray@ncparks.gov



Membership Programs for 2013

Time/Date	Speaker	Topic
7:00 pm March 7, 2013	Maria de Bruyn	Birds of Kruger National Park, South Africa, Etosha National Park, Namibia and Nairobi National Park, Kenya
7:00 pm April 4, 2013	Jeff Beane NC Museum of Natural Sciences	Snakes of North Carolina
7:00 pm May 2, 2013	John Gerwin NC Museum of Natural Science	Birds of Nicaragua

Membership Meetings

Our March 3, 2013, speaker will be Maria de Bruyn, who will discuss the birds of Kruger National Park, South Africa; Etosha National Park, Namibia; and Nairobi National Park, Kenya. She will also describe Project Noah, a worldwide educational website on flora and fauna. Come learn more about the birds in Africa.

Our April 4, 2013, presentation will be “Snakes of North Carolina” by Jeff Beane, Herpetology Collections Manager for the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences. Are there Cottonmouths in Chatham County? We will find out this and other information on snakes in our State from Jeff!

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. The parking lot is on the southeast corner, too. The meetings start at 7pm with refreshments, chatting with friends, and meeting visitors or new members. Chapter business begins at 7:15 and the program begins at 7:30 and runs through 8:30pm. **Everyone, even non-members, is always welcome! See you there!**

We are 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 spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com. Thanks!



FEEDER WATCH

By Tom Driscoll

Pine Siskins have been gorging themselves on my nyjer (thistle) seed. Have you seen Pine Siskins? We don't see them every year, but they are here in large numbers this winter. I have been using a lot more feed this winter. Some of my birds, such as all the woodpeckers, Brown Thrashers, Pine Warblers, and Eastern Bluebirds, prefer suet. The crows, both Fish and American, also like suet and I will see them perform acrobatics to get at it. The winter visitors will remain for another month or so. However, I have noticed that some of the earliest returning birds, such as Red-winged Blackbirds, Fish Crows, and Common Grackles at my feeders recently. They seem to be early this year.

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. I still have White-breasted Nuthatches, Brown-headed Nuthatches, Eastern Towhees, Carolina Wrens, Pine Warblers, and Yellow-rumped Warblers at my feeders. On the Great Backyard Bird Count, there was snow and rain all Saturday, so even my Red-breasted Nuthatch came to the feeder. Have you seen one? The regular woodpeckers, the Red-bellied and the Downy, are also visiting my feeders every day. If you don't recognize these birds or the bird names, then may I suggest you purchase a bird identification guide that is available in many stores.

Have you cleaned your bird feeders lately? Some birds contract diseases that are spread through bird feeders. You may have noticed House Finches with runny eye fluid. They can get this condition from bird feeders. Clean by using a weak bleach solution.

Also, it's time to clean out your bluebird houses. Clean, if they are not already in use, 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 or visit our website at newhopeaudubon.org/birdhouses.html 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 spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com.





New Hope Audubon Officers for 2012-2013

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Vice President	Robert "Bo" Howes
Secretary	Pat Reid
Treasurer	Jill Paul
Director	John Kent
Director	Mark Kosiewski
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Bird Seed Sale	Mary George
Christmas & Spring Bird Counts	Norm Budnitz
Conservation Chair	Mark Kosiewski
Eagle Count	Steve McMurray
Education Chair	vacant
Hospitality Co-Chairs	Jim and Mary George
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Important Bird Area, Jordan Lake ...	Bo Howes
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Program Chair	Mark Kosiewski
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Stream Watch	John Kent
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