

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

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What's That, You Say?

by Norm Budnitz

People often ask me why bird names change, why individual species move around in their field guides from one addition to the next, or why whole groups of birds move. Is it just so that publishers can sell more books? Is it because hard-core birders want to make it difficult for novices to join the 'club?' Well, no and no. There are actually good scientific reasons for these changes.

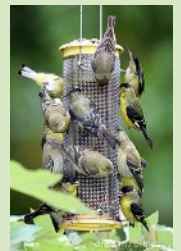


When I was a kid, I had Baltimore Orioles nesting in my backyard. But as a young adult, when I visited my parents, those orange and black birds were Northern Orioles. And when I went to see the old folks in their dotage, they were Baltimore Orioles again. Same species; different names.

The breeding range of Baltimore Orioles covers most of eastern North America, extending westward into the Great Plains. In western North America there is another species called Bullock's Oriole. Its range extends from the west coast, eastward into the Great Plains. Where the ranges of these two species overlap—central Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas—they hybridize (interbreed). A lot! When scientists studied the extent of this hybridization in the 1980s, they presented their recommendation to the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), the arbiter of such things, that the two species be joined (lumped) into one larger species called Northern Oriole. The AOU agreed and Northern Oriole came into existence.

When two populations of birds (or any other critters) hybridize, there is often a central zone where almost every individual is a hybrid. But in addition, there is a certain amount of hybridizing that occurs away from the central zone, reaching out

Feeder Watch



by Tom Driscoll

This has been a cold winter for us and our feeder birds. I am putting out much more suet than ever; birds that rarely come to the suet, such as the Hermit Thrush and Yellow-rumped Warblers, were coming every day for a couple of weeks. The American Crows were also visiting my suet feeders often. The Fish Crows have now returned and are eating suet as well. Can you tell the difference between a Fish Crow and an American Crow? The answer is in the next newsletter. Have you noticed any new or different birds eating your suet?

I am putting out a lot of seed--nyjer, millet, and sunflower seeds, as well. The Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and other migrants

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into the areas where each single group tends to dominate. This peripheral hybridization is called *introgression*. But that's not what is seen with these orioles. In the central zone there are, indeed, lots of hybrids. But there are also a fair number of birds that appear to be pure Baltimores and pure Bullock's. Also, outside the central zone, there are very few hybrids—i.e., very little introgression. Based on that information, the AOU changed its mind and split Northern Oriole back into Baltimore and Bullock's.

But wait! There's more. Now that scientists have analyzed the DNA, the genetic material, of these species, they have discovered something that seems to 'push' them further apart as separate species. It turns out that Baltimore and Bullock's are not each other's closest relatives. A third species, Streak-backed Oriole, seems to be the closest relative to Bullock's, while Altimira Oriole seems to be a sister species to Baltimore. And a fifth species, Black-backed Oriole, which hybridizes with Bullock's where their ranges meet, is actually closer DNA-wise to Baltimore. Oh dear, oh dear. What's a body to do? At present, all 5 of these species are considered to be separate.

By the way, there is one more point to be made about these New World orioles. *They aren't orioles at all!*

What's that, you say? In Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, there is a family of birds known as the Oriolidae, the Old World orioles. Actually, they were just known as orioles before anyone knew there was a New World. But when, suddenly, there *was* a New World (at least in the eyes of Europeans), and when those Europeans saw our black and orange birds, they called their new friends orioles because they looked so much like their old friends in the Old World. In fact, the New World orioles are in a different family known as the Icteridae, the New World blackbirds—Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds, for example. The Icteridae are completely different from and unrelated to the Oriolidae.

And what about these New World blackbirds? They are unrelated to the Old World blackbirds (the kind that got baked in pies in nursery rhymes).

What's that, you say? The bird in England known as a Blackbird is actually a thrush, in the family Turdidae (no giggling, please). And which common species in the New World is in the family Turdidae? The America Robin. Which should really be called the American Thrush, because it is most decidedly *not a robin!*



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What's that, you say? Our robin is not a robin? Nope. Early European settlers thought it looked a bit like their Old World friend, their robin redbreast, now officially called European Robin. Those Old World robins are classified in the family Muscicapidae, the Old World flycatchers, which are completely unrelated to our New World flycatchers, family Tyrannidae.

What's that, you say? I'm done saying. You sort it out. I'm too tired.

Calendar of Activities



Saturday, March 1, **Stream Watch** with John Kent 9:00am

Thursday, March 6, **Membership Meeting**, NC Botanical Gardens, 7:00pm, Ed Corey, NC State Parks, "Dragonflies of NC"

Saturday, March 15, **Field trip with Eddie Owens**, Meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley (Farrington Rd. and Hwy. 54) parking lot at 7:30am. We will be out about 3 hours looking for winter birds. The location is to be determined. hiking will be easy. Wear sturdy shoes and bring water and snacks. If you plan on attending, then please contact Eddie Owens at banjoman_57@yahoo.com. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome!

Sunday, March 23, **Hiking Trail Development Work**, 1:00pm. Meet at the New Hope Audubon Society's Jordan Lake Eagle Viewing Platform site on Martha's Chapel Rd., one half mile east of the intersection with Farrington Point Rd. Bring work gloves, shovels, maddoxes, or rakes and help develop the hiking trails in this area. If you have questions or need more information, then please contact Jill Paul at jillpaul@gmail.com.

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

Thursday, April 3, **Membership Meeting**, NC Botanical Gardens, 7:00pm. Chris Hakkenberg, UNC, "Tracking Forest Dynamics from Space"

Saturday, May 3, **Stream Watch** with John Kent 9:00am



NHAS Membership Meeting Speakers for 2014

Our membership meetings are held in the Education Center at the North Carolina Botanical Garden, 100 Old Mason Farm Road, Chapel Hill, on the first Thursday of every month (except June, July, and August). Everyone, including non-members, is welcome! See you at a meeting soon!

Date & Time	Speaker	Topic
March 6 2014 7:00 pm	Ed Corey, NC State Parks,	Dragonflies of North Carolina
April 3, 2014 7:00 pm	Chris Hakkenberg, UNC	Tracking Forest Dynamics from Space
May 1, 2014 7:00pm	Mark Kosiewski, NHAS	Piedmont Barn Owl Initiative



Feeder Watch by Tom Driscoll cont'd from page 1

from the north in addition to our resident birds, such as the Northern Cardinals, Tufted Titmice, and others, are eating a lot of seed. For the coldest weather, Song Sparrows and Red-winged Blackbirds were coming to the seed feeders. Several others reported seeing Red-winged Blackbirds at their feeders for the first time this winter. Did you have any new birds show up at your feeders during our snow storms?

Have you seen any of your birds molting into their breeding plumage? Some of mine, including the Eastern Bluebirds and the American Goldfinches, are starting to change their plumage. Some of the birds are also starting to sing their courting songs, though I believe some are not ready to start the process yet and are just practicing because we had some warm days.

In addition to molting into breeding plumage, some birds are already checking out nesting cavities and sites. I have seen chickadees and bluebirds looking into the nest boxes in our yard. Do you have your nest boxes up yet and cleaned out? If you do not have nest boxes, then please contact me. The New Hope Audubon Society sells nest boxes for bluebirds and nuthatches for \$15. We deliver these boxes as well!

Finally, the hummingbirds will be returning near the end of March, so it is almost time to clean up the bird feeders and prepare sugar water.

Although I discuss the birds I am seeing or you can see at your feeders, I am hoping to receive reports and questions about the birds you are seeing. This will make the articles more interesting. If you have ideas about topics to discuss, 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 2013-2014

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Vice President	Robert "Bo" Howes
Secretary	Pat Reid
Treasurer	Jill Paul
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Director	Mark Kosiewski
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