

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol 39 No 4 Sept/Oct 2014

P.O. Box 2693, Chapel Hill, NC 27515
<http://www.newhopeaudubon.org>



My Two Cents Worth

by Tom Driscoll

As summer is winding to a close, the New Hope Audubon Society is gearing up for our upcoming year (September through May). Every year near the end of summer, the Board of Directors meets to plan our activities for the next “year.” It is an exciting time when we discuss the projects that we will undertake to benefit nature, the environment, and our communities! In the upcoming year, we plan to promote bird friendly communities and the use of native plants (more about these initiatives to come in the next few months). However, we have to balance what we plan for with our ongoing activities, such as monthly membership meetings and Christmas and Spring Bird Counts that you have come to expect from us.

Before we do this planning though, we take a step back and look at what we accomplished during the past year. I believe this is an impressive list, considering we are all volunteers with no paid staff:

- We finished the installation of 26 Barn Owl nesting boxes to try to reestablish Barn Owls in the Piedmont.
- We developed 2 new trails at our Jordan Lake eagle viewing platform site on Martha’s Chapel Rd.
- We taught a bird identification course.
- We coordinated the annual Christmas and Spring bird counts at Jordan Lake.
- We participated in the UNC Science Expo.
- We participated in the Eno River Festival.
- We talked to three school classes about Brown-headed Nuthatches and donated nesting boxes.

The Berkshires

by Norm Budnitz

Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Nope, not Berkshire, the county in England. And not a county in North Carolina either. This summer, I returned home to my old stomping grounds in western Massachusetts where I grew up. I didn’t do any ‘stomping’ this trip, but in the past my friends and I stomped a lot. We hiked up and down the Berkshire Hills, canoed the backwaters of the local lakes, and did our best to identify every plant, animal, and fungus we could find. I lived about a quarter mile from the Housatonic River and went birding there as often as I could. (Little did I know that I was possibly exposing myself to PCBs, a waste product from the local General Electric plant. But that’s an unsavory story for another day.)



***The Berkshires* by Norm Budnitz** cont'd from page 1

On this trip, my old pals, Dave and Thom, and I got together and drove around the county, stopping here and there for some easy-going car birding. We didn't see much, but we told lots of stories of the old days, marveling at our stupidity, but laughing the whole time. We did have fun.

Some of the places we loved to go were sphagnum bogs. There were several of these quaking mat bogs in the Berkshires, and we loved to poke around in them. Imagine a small pond, carved out in glacial times with a rim of earth all around it, but with no particular input other than rain, and no outflow except evaporation. The plants and animals that live in such ponds also die there, and since the process of decay tends to be acidic, the ponds themselves become acidic. Acid loving plants like laurels, certain orchids, pitcher plants, and sphagnum moss thrive in these conditions. As it grows along the banks, the sphagnum begins to form a mat that extends out into the water. And this is where the fun begins.

The sphagnum mat floats on the surface, so after decades or even centuries, it closes in on the open water. And as the moss dies, the mat becomes thicker and thicker, with more moss growing on the surface. Walking out on the mat is an adventure, because it's like walking on a giant, quaking, water bed, soaking wet and ready to suck in an unwary hiker. A misstep might result in a leg disappearing in the green and brown muck up to your thigh. Depending how thick the mat is, you might be able to wiggle your foot in open water, while the rest of your leg is held fast. So there you are with one leg stuck tight and the other bent at the knee in a way that allows for no leverage whatsoever to get you out. The rule: never go into the bog alone. They might find your skeleton mixed with the remains of ancient dinosaurs. And if you do get out, you may end up going home with one less boot than you came with.

Another one of our trips was to drive to the top of Mount Greylock, at 3,491 feet, the highest spot in Massachusetts. Herman Melville, who lived in nearby Pittsfield while writing *Moby Dick*, built a porch on the north side of his house so that he could see Greylock, which to him looked like a giant whale. The nice thing for us about the mountain was that its peak was covered with a spruce/fir forest and was home to a small population of Bicknell's Thrushes. In those days, Bicknell's was considered to be a subspecies of Gray-cheeked Thrush, but we knew they were different and liked to go up the mountain to hear them sing at dawn. And therein lies another tale.



Cont'd from pg 2, The Berkshires

One day in June, Thom and I decided to go camping on top of Greylock so we could wake up to the melodious song of the Bicknell's. We piled all our gear into the car, drove up the mountain, set up our tent, and cooked dinner. The place was deserted, so we felt like we owned the mountain top and basked in the hush that settled in after sunset. Little did we know what was in store.

In the wee hours of the morning, we both awakened to what we thought were the sounds of cars. How could that be? What (other) fools would drive up Greylock pre-dawn? Who could possibly be so rude as to interrupt our glorious, quiet pilgrimage to hear the Bicknell's? Warily, we emerged from our tent, and lo and behold, the parking lot was full of cars. Let me repeat that: *full* of cars.

Prom night! It was mid-June, and cars full of high school kids who had been partying all night came up to the top of Greylock to watch the sunrise. I suspect that not a one of those kids was there for the thrushes.

Ah, the joys of birding in the beautiful Berkshires. Just check the local high school calendar and don't go into the bogs alone.

My Two Cents, Cont'd from pg 1

- We conducted Streamwatch at 7 sites along New Hope Creek.
- We made presentations on macroinvertebrates at the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University.
- We conducted breeding bird surveys.
- We worked with Boy Scouts to achieve the Eagle Scout rank and helped them earn merit badges.

This is just a partial list of what we accomplished last year! If you are interested in and want to support our work, then I encourage you to look at our calendar on our website: <newhopeaudubon.org/calendar.html>. If you are interested in donating to our efforts, there are links on our website for donations!



Membership Meeting Programs

Our first membership meeting of the new “year” is on September 4th at 6:30 pm (please note that this is the only membership meeting of the year that starts at this time). It is a special meeting in that we have a pot luck dinner and our members are welcome to show 10 of their best nature photos of the past year! We will also have a brief presentation by students from the Duke School Middle School. They will discuss their spring 2014 project to install and monitor Brown-headed Nuthatch and Eastern Bluebird nest boxes.

Please bring a dish to share for 4 to 6 people. In order to minimize the refuse we send to the land fill, please bring your own plate, silverware, a cup for drinks, and your own napkins. If you are planning on showing some nature photos, please bring a thumb drive with your photos.

On October 2 at 7:00 pm, Rangel Diaz, a North Carolina State University Biologist will speak about “South Florida Specialties and Exotics.” As you may know, the flora and fauna in South Florida is more tropical, so there are several species of North American birds that are only found in that area. Our membership meeting is at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC 27517. It is located at the intersection of Old Mason Farm Road and Hwy. 15-501. We meet in the education classrooms in the north building. Parking is available near the building.

Eagle Count by Steve McMurray

Can you identify an eagle and enjoy being outside early in the morning? If so, try out our quarterly Eagle Counts. This is a great opportunity to enjoy Jordan Lake and watch birds too! We have several sites around the lake that are in need of volunteers. Looking back on the last four counts, we had an average of 6 sites being manned. Our goal is to have most if not all, the 18 locations around the lake manned. Of the last four counts, we saw an average of 12 adult eagles and 10 immature eagles. If we had more sites manned, I bet we would spot more eagles! This is a great citizen science project and a great way to keep track of our magnificent bird right in our backyard.

On our past count in July, 2014, we saw a total of 15 eagles with 4 of them being immature. We had a total of 12 volunteers at 7 sites. The weather was nice and it was a beautiful morning to be enjoying the lake.

If you would like to participate or have any questions, please contact me at steve.mcmurray@ncparks.gov or at 919-362-0586 ext 219.



Bird Seed Sale by Mary George

Help your feathered friends and New Hope Audubon Society, too --buy your winter supply of bird seed from us!

The Annual NHAS Bird Seed Sale is your opportunity to buy good quality birdseed, and is one of our important fund raisers to assist in funding projects which promote the conservation and enjoyment of birds and other wildlife. Paper order forms have been sent to members in our annual mailing and online order forms are available on our web site. The deadline for placing orders this year is October 15, 2014. The pickup date is Saturday, November 1, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. at the Wild Bird Center, Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill, N.C. Orders will be delivered to: Fearington Village, Carolina Meadows, Carol Woods, and upon request to elderly or special needs individuals who reside in the area.

The link to our bird seed sale on the NHAS web page is: <http://www.newhopeaudubon.org/birdseedsale2014.html>.

We need your help in getting the word out about the bird seed sale! Here are ways you can help:

- If your neighborhood has a listserv and you would be willing to post an announcement to the listserv, please contact Mary George at 919-929-5928 or mcgeorge44@gmail.com to receive copy for the announcement as well as an order form to post;
- Personally tell your friends, neighbors and co-workers about the bird seed sale and encourage them to purchase their winter supply of bird seed through NHAS....make sure they have an order form;
- And, of course, be sure to place your own order.

We urge you to buy as much seed as you need for the entire winter from our local Audubon Chapter.

Thank you. Mary George, Bird Seed Sale Coordinator

Calendar of Activities



Thursday, Sept 4, **Membership Meeting at NC Bot Gardens. Pot luck 6:30 pm**

Saturday, Sept 6, **Stream Watch** with John Kent 8:00am

Thursday, Oct 2, **Membership Meeting at NC Bot Gardens, 7:00 pm**, Rangel Diaz, a North Carolina State University Biologist will speak about "South Florida Specialties and Exotics"

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

Sunday, Oct 12, **Eagle Count** with Steve McMurray, 7:00am



Feeder Watch

By Tom Driscoll



It is a mad house around my house these days! The hummingbirds are chasing each other around the garden to protect their feeders from intruders. They are also chasing other hummingbirds away from the salvia and other plants that are in bloom. We have planted a lot of native flowering plants for hummingbirds and other pollinators. You will be hearing more about the benefits of planting native plants in the months to come as we are working with the National Audubon Society and Audubon North Carolina to promote the use of native plants.

We also have been seeing Cooper's Hawks around our feeders. As you may know, Cooper's Hawks eat birds. They are long-winged and long-tailed which allow them to zip quickly through forests, maneuver around tree trunks and other obstacles, and catch birds unaware. I can often tell when the hawks are around because the smaller birds will "freeze" in place and the Blue Jays and American Crows will make a loud racket.

The suet feeders have also been very busy. We are providing two cakes of suet every day! We have several species of woodpeckers, including Red-bellied, Hairy, and Downy Woodpeckers, that regularly come to the suet feeders and are still bringing their young. Other birds, including Eastern Bluebirds, Pine Warblers, American Crows, Common Grackles, Tufted Titmice, and Brown Thrashers, are also eating suet.

At this time of year, many of the birds, especially Northern Cardinals, may appear scraggly as they are molting into their new plumage. The Northern Cardinals can sometimes lose all their crown feathers and appear bald; not a pretty sight! The molting process is gradual and may take several months. During the winter, the juvenile birds will molt into their adult plumage for spring.

If you have unusual bird sightings at your feeders or any questions about feeding birds, then please contact me at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com!



New Hope Audubon Officers for 2014-2015

President	Tom Driscoll		
Vice President	Bo Howes	Director	Mark Kosiewski
Treasurer	Frances Sample	Director	John Kent
Secretary	Pat Reid	Director	Carol Ripple

Committee Chairs and Special Projects

Education Chair	Mary George	Bird Seed Sale Chair	Mary George
Conservation Chair	Mark Kosiewski	Christmas & Spring Bird Counts Coordinator	Norm Budnitz
Membership Chair	Jim George	Eagle Count Coordinator	Steve McMurray
Publicity Chair	Jim George	Wildathon Chair	Vacant
Newsletter Editor	Pat Reid	Wildlife Observation Platform	Bo Howes
Programs Chair	Mark Kosiewski	Important Bird Area, Eno River	Tom Driscoll
Stream Watch	John Kent	Important Bird Area, Jordan Lake	Bo Howes
Hospitality Chair	Jill Paul	Archives Coordinator	Vacant
Webmaster	Norm Budnitz		