

# New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol 39 No 5 Nov/Dec 2014

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



## My Two Cents Worth

by Tom Driscoll

As the days grow shorter, the weather grows generally colder, and many people are “hibernating” for the next 5 months or so. The New Hope Audubon Society is just the opposite. We have lots of fun activities planned for the next few months. We have bird walks, stream watch, Christmas Bird Counts, and membership meetings scheduled in November and December. In the new year, we have our annual Martin Luther King, Jr., weekend trip and we hope to begin work on an extension (into Siler’s Bog) to the new NC Botanical Garden’s Mason Farm Preserve boardwalk. We are discussing a new bird identification course, and of course, there will be more bird walks, more stream watches, and more membership meetings! Instead of being a couch potato this winter, I encourage you to find the activity that suits you best and get involved!

## Pelagic Birding Part 1

by Norm Budnitz

The word *pelagic* usually refers to the open ocean, away from coastal areas or inland waters. *Birding*, of course, refers to the activity of looking for and (usually) enjoying the avian inhabitants of our world. So, pelagic birding relates to the search for those winged creatures that live on the open ocean.

In the northern hemisphere, pelagic birds include such bird groups as shearwaters, petrels, storm-petrels, a few species of albatrosses, and the northern equivalent of penguins, the alcids (puffins, auklets, murres, and guillemots). In addition, there are some open ocean species of gulls (kittiwakes), terns (bridled, sooty), tropicbirds, jaegers and skuas. The southern Oceans are home to these



same groups, except that instead of alcids, there are the southern equivalent of penguins—er, penguins.

Pelagic birds have evolved with an array of adaptations that make it possible for them to fly, feed, sleep, and generally carry on all of life's necessities except reproduction without needing to set foot on terra firma. Nesting, however, does require some time spent on land, often on remote islands, since incubating eggs is a bit difficult on the bounding seas. The eggs simply wouldn't hold still, and it would be hard to keep them warm.

So if you would like to see some pelagic birds, here are your main choices. Do a sea watch by sitting on an exposed beach or rocky outcrop in an area where ocean currents and winds might bring pelagic species close enough to see. Travel to some remote islands during the breeding season. Or head out on the ocean in one of those floating devices known as boats or ships. In North Carolina, there is a fourth option, but it is not an everyday occurrence. When hurricanes invade our state, they sometimes blow pelagic species inland where they may show up on our inland lakes like Falls and Jordan.



Over the years, I have gone in search of pelagic birds in all of these modes. I have sat at sea watch on a pebble beach on St. Lawrence Island in the northern Bering Sea. Cold winds (30 to 40 °F, 20 to 30 mph), rain or sleet or even snow, and one very cold rear end. But the payoff was seeing thousands of puffins (both Horned and Tufted--left), murres (Common and Thick-billed), and auklets (Least, Crested, and Parakeet--right) streaming past in the spring. And I have



watched as millions (yes, millions!) of Short-tailed Shearwaters arced and dipped in swirling masses in the fall as they left their arctic summer feeding grounds to head south for another summer in the southern hemisphere.

I once spent a whole day on one of the Farne Islands in the North Sea off Great Britain, amongst throngs of nesting terns and Atlantic Puffins. The sounds of a thousand Arctic Terns (not really a pelagic species) squabbling and calling to their chicks or parents can be deafening. And unhappy tern parents will show their displeasure by ejecting green and white goo quite accurately onto the heads of offending humans. Hats and rain gear are recommended, even on clear days. The puffins were nesting in burrows on the island, but they did not add to the din because they rarely make any sounds at all—just the occasional low-pitched murmur from time to time.



## Feeder Watch

By Tom Driscoll



With this article, “Feeder Watch” begins its tenth year of discussing feeder birds. This was Pat Reid’s (the Newsletter Editor) idea! Although I continue to 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](mailto:spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com).

The leaves are starting to fall which will make the birds easier to spot! The days are much shorter and the temperatures are colder; all these factors have made the birds feed more actively at my feeders. Our winter visitors, Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and other migrants from the north may be starting to show up. Have you seen any winter migrants yet? I have seen Yellow-rumped Warblers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers already.

Our year-round residents that frequent feeders include Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Can you recognize these birds? Of course, the Northern Cardinal, our state bird, is always quick to come to the feeders. I use tube feeders and platform feeders. Some of the birds are not as adept at dining from the tube feeders, so the platform is helpful for them. Sometimes, I also put millet on the ground for towhees and some of our winter sparrows. Also, during the winter, there are periods of no or little rain. Make sure your birds have a source of water.

At this time of year, many of the birds, especially Northern Cardinals, may appear scraggly as they are molting into their new plumage. This is a gradual process that may take several months. During the winter, the juvenile birds will molt into their adult plumage for spring.

We have several species, including Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, which regularly come to the suet feeders. Other woodpeckers, including the Pileated Woodpecker, and other residents, such as Eastern Bluebirds, Pine Warblers, and Brown Thrashers, may also eat suet. Some residents, such as American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds, eat berries from the Holly Bushes, Dogwood, and juniper (also known as cedar) trees in your yard. You may not be the only one watching the birds at your feeders. Hawks, such as Cooper’s and





Continued from Pg 2 Pelagic Birding



A trip to St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs in the middle of the Bering Sea is a treat beyond imagining. Consider a thousand tiny Least Auklets (sparrow-sized alcids--left) swirling around a rocky shoreline, landing, touching bills with potential mates, flying off to swirl some more. For hours. All in foreplay to establishing mating pairs and nesting sites.

How about hundreds of murres perched precariously on thin ledges of rocky cliffs (right). Murres lay triangularly shaped eggs, so if the eggs begin to roll, they just go around in tight circles rather than falling off into the ocean or onto the cliffs below. Some eggs (and chicks) do fall occasionally, so if they have access, there may be arctic foxes (left) waiting below to reap the harvest. After the breeding season, these birds all head out to sea for the rest of the year. Young murres hang around with their fathers (!) for several weeks while mom goes off on her own.



Next issue, Part II—Going out to sea in vessels large and small.

## Feeder Watch Continued

Sharp-shinned Hawks, feed on small birds and may also be “feeding” at your feeders. Have you seen any smallish hawks?

Most of our Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have departed for warmer climes. However, keep your feeders up for another month or so because we sometimes have “western” hummingbirds, such as Rufous or Calliope Hummingbirds, spend the winter here. If you are still seeing a hummingbird, please let me know!



## Christmas Bird Counts Norm Budnitz

'Tis (almost) the season to be jolly and to get out and count birds. Each year, the National Audubon Society sponsors the largest, bird related, on-going citizen science project in the nation. The Christmas Bird Count has been running since the early days of the last century, and we at New Hope Audubon have been sponsoring a Count in a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Jordan Lake since 1977. We invite you to contact us (see below) and/or the organizers of any of the other local counts if you would like to take part. If you are experienced, we'll give you an assignment and send you on your way. If you are new to the game, we'll team you up with more experienced people so that you can learn the system and the birds.

Here are the dates for some of our local counts. For the names and contact information of the organizers of these counts, please visit our website home page at <[newhopeaudubon.org](http://newhopeaudubon.org)>. The Carolina Bird Club publishes a more extensive list of all the counts in North and South Carolina at <[carolinabirdclub.org/christmas/](http://carolinabirdclub.org/christmas/)>.

December 14—Durham  
December 20—Raleigh  
December 21—Chapel Hill  
January 2—Kerr Lake  
January 4—Jordan Lake  
January 5—Falls Lake

## *November Membership Meeting*

New Hope Audubon's guest speaker this month is Heather Hahn, Executive Director of Audubon North Carolina. Join Heather as she discusses Audubon's recent climate report, which identifies future impacts on North American birds. Heather will discuss the details of the study, and the role that individuals can play to help birds survive climate change. Our meeting will be held Thursday, November 6th at 7pm, at the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. Non-members are welcome.



## Field Guide to the Future: Half of North America's Birds at Risk from Global Warming

Half of the bird species in the continental United States and Canada are threatened by global warming. Many of these species could go extinct without decisive action to protect their habitats and reduce the severity of global warming. That's the startling conclusion reached by Audubon scientists in a new study.

Here in our area, one of the birds classified by Audubon as "endangered" by climate change is the Brown-headed Nuthatch. As you probably know, the Brown-headed Nuthatch already is a species of concern to us in North Carolina because of loss of habitat, and we have been working to restore suitable nesting places with our nest box program..

Of 588 bird species examined in the study, 314 are at risk. Of those, 126 species are at risk of severe declines by 2050, and a further 188 species face the same fate by 2080, with numerous extinctions possible if global warming is allowed to erase the havens birds occupy today.

"The greatest threat our birds face today is global warming," said Audubon Chief Scientist Gary Langham, who led the investigation. "That's our unequivocal conclusion after seven years of painstakingly careful and thorough research. Global warming threatens the basic fabric of life on which birds - and the rest of us - depend, and we have to act quickly and decisively to avoid catastrophe for them and us."

To understand the links between where birds live and the climatic conditions that support them, Langham and other Audubon ornithologists analyzed more than 40 years of historical North American climate data and millions of historical bird records from the U.S. Geological Survey's North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Understanding those links then allows scientists to project where birds are likely to be able to survive - and not survive - in the future.

The study offers an invaluable new way for Audubon to discuss and address global warming by bringing the issue into backyards and neighborhoods across America. It also reveals areas that are likely to remain stable for birds even as climate changes, enabling Audubon to identify "stronghold" areas that birds will need to survive in the future.

The result is a roadmap for bird conservation in coming decades in a warming climate. The study provides a key entry point for Audubon's greater engagement on the urgent issue of global warming. Responding to the magnitude of the threat to our birds, Audubon is greatly expanding its climate initiative, aiming to engage a larger and more diverse set of voices in support of protecting birds.

Solutions will include personal choices to conserve energy and create backyard bird habitat, local action to create community climate action plans, state-based work to increase rooftop solar and energy efficiency, and our work in Important Bird Areas and other efforts to protect and expand bird habitats. Locally we already are working to protect our Eno River IBA and Jordan Lake IBA and are pursuing "Bird Friendly Communities" initiatives, many of which can start in our own backyards.

For more information, visit: <http://climate.audubon.org/>





## *Calendar of Activities*



Saturday, November 1, **Bird Seed Sale Order Pick-up**, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, at the Wild Bird Center, Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill.

Saturday, November 1, **Stream Watch** with John Kent, 9:00 AM.

Thursday, November 6, **NHAS Membership Meeting**, 7:00 PM, Heather Hahn, Audubon North Carolina, will tell us about the National Audubon Society Climate Change Initiative.

Sunday, November 16, **Bird Walk** with Tom Driscoll, 1:00 PM. Meet at the Wild Bird Center, East Gate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill.

Thursday, December 4, **NHAS Membership Meeting**, 7:00 PM, Nate Swick, ABA Blogger and eBird Reviewer, will tell us about eBird and Citizen Science.

Saturday, December 6, **Stream Watch** with John Kent, 9:00 AM.

Sunday, December 14, **Durham Christmas Bird Count**.

Sunday, December 21, **Chapel Hill Christmas Bird Count**.

Sunday, January 4, **Jordan Lake Christmas Bird Count**.

Thursday, January 8, **NHAS Membership Meeting**, Marcia Herman-Giddens, Tick specialist, will tell us about Ticks, Infections, and Keeping Safe



## *NHAS at Jordan Lake Heritage Days*



Jill Paul and Mary George working our booth



Collage by Steve McMurray of Heritage Days



Mary George helping play our bird game



Jim George and Steve McMurray at our booth





## New Hope Audubon Officers for 2014-2015

<b>President</b>	Tom Driscoll		
<b>Vice President</b>	Bo Howes	<b>Director</b>	Mark Kosiewski
<b>Treasurer</b>	Frances Sample	<b>Director</b>	John Kent
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## Committee Chairs and Special Projects

<b>Education Chair</b>	Mary George	<b>Bird Seed Sale Chair</b>	Mary George
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<b>Stream Watch</b>	John Kent	<b>Important Bird Area, Jordan Lake</b>	Bo Howes
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<b>Webmaster</b>	Norm Budnitz		