

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol 40 No 2 Mar/Apr 2015

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



My Two Cents Worth

by Tom Driscoll

In January, the New Hope Audubon Society (NHAS) sponsored two overnight trips. The first was to Huntington Beach State Park in Murrell's Inlet, SC, (just south of Myrtle Beach) and the second was a "Little Brown Jobs (LBJs)" workshop in eastern NC.

There were twenty-two of us who traveled to HBSP during Martin Luther King, Jr., weekend (group photo by Caroline Gilmore). The park is a well-known birding locale with several different habitats including a beautiful beach, two jetties, acres of salt marshes, fresh water ponds, pine forests, and others. We saw more than 120 species of birds and everyone saw at least one "life" bird except the trip leaders. At the park, we saw both Brown and American White Pelicans, many duck species including Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Common Eider, Black and White-winged Scoters, Green-winged Teal, and others; many waders including Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets,



Breakfast Fit for an Eagle

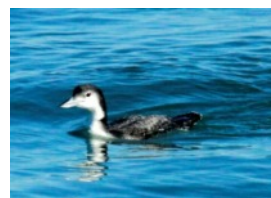
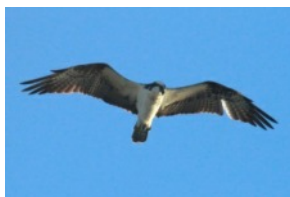
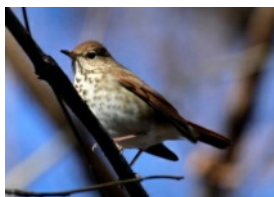
by Norm Budnitz

On Sunday, January 11, 2014, I participated in the annual mid-winter Bald Eagle census at Falls Lake. My vantage point for this count was the Cheek Road Bridge on the border of Durham and Wake Counties. The following is a transcript of my notes. When describing events like these, I always try to be as objective as possible. It is not for me to ascribe emotions or intentions to these birds. Though I have decades of experience observing birds, I still cannot see inside their heads. So if the following list of observations seems dry and matter-of-fact, that's good. For now, I'll leave the anthropomorphizing to the poets.

0700 Start observations from northeast end of Cheek Road Bridge—18 °F, wind calm, clear sky. The sky is beginning to

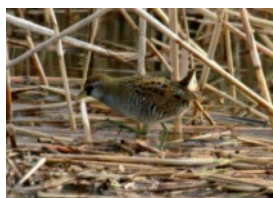


White Ibis (photo by Maria de Bruyn), and others; many shorebirds including Ruddy Turnstones, numerous Sanderlings, Dunlin, Purple Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, and others; Clapper Rail (photo by Caroline Gilmore), Hermit Thrush (photo by Vern Bothwell), an Osprey that didn't migrate further south (photo by Vern Bothwell), Common Loons (photo by Vern Bothwell), and many other species.



Norm Budnitz and Frances Sample had gone to South Carolina early to scout out a place to see Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and found them at the Santee Coastal Reserve forests south of Georgetown, SC. So we drove there one day during our trip. Everyone in the group saw these birds well, along with many other bird species and even pitcher plants. We had good seafood at several restaurants in the area and, because there were several birthdays to be celebrated during the trip, we had a birthday party at one of the condos. We had a great trip and several mentioned that they couldn't wait for next year.

The LBJ workshop was held several weeks later in January. 'Little Brown Jobs' (LBJ) is a birders' term for sparrows and other little brown birds that are difficult to identify. A group of 8 of us led by Norm Budnitz started in Plymouth, NC, and went to Lake Phelps, Pettigrew State Park, Pungo Lake of the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and Lake Mattamuskeet. Sparrows were the target species, and we did manage to find many LBJs and over 65 species of birds altogether. Because we were at or near lakes often, we did see many species of ducks, geese, and we saw many Tundra Swans. We saw a Sora (a type of rail, photo by Vern Bothwell) and a female Common Yellowthroat (photo by Vern Bothwell) at Lake Mattamuskeet. One of the highlights was going to the American Turf Farm near



Creswell, NC, and seeing Horned Larks, American Pipits, Eastern Meadowlarks, and other species. Another highlight was seeing about 15 eagles flying over aquaculture ponds at a NC State research station in Roper, NC. The highlight of the





Breakfast Fit for an Eagle cont'd from pg 1

get light, but the sun is not yet above the horizon. There is a layer of ice over the shallower parts of the water, while the deeper areas are ice free. The low vegetation along the edge of the lake is covered with hoar frost.

0703 A few Ring-billed Gulls have begun flying, circling slowly through the air above the lake.

0705 I can see an adult Bald Eagle standing either in shallow water or on ice at the surface. The eagle is across the lake from where I am, about 500 feet away. The circling gulls now number 25 to 30.

0706 The eagle takes off. There are now more than a hundred gulls circling and calling over the lake.

0707 The eagle starts chasing an immature gull. The eagle is flying directly behind the gull, twisting and turning as the gull twists and turns in the lead.

0710 A second adult eagle joins in the chase.

0712 One of the eagles is back on the water (or ice) and has the gull held down. I did not observe the actual capture because I was following the second eagle, which has flown up, possibly into a tree, but out of sight from my perspective.

0715 The eagle with the gull has now backed off about 20 feet, leaving the gull floundering around. There are now more than 200 gulls circling in the area.

0720 The gull flies up. The eagle flies up and forces the gull back down. The eagle now holds the gull down.

0722 The gull has moved away from the eagle, about 5 feet. The gull is clearly injured and cannot fly. The eagle stays where it is.

0723 The eagle flies up in the direction where the second eagle went. It looks like it went up into a tree, but out of sight from my perspective.

0724 One of the eagles circles around, grabs the gull in its talons, and carries it toward the shore.

0742 I drive to the southwest end of the bridge. I can now see an eagle standing by a foot-high stump. The gull carcass is on the stump at the water's edge, and the eagle is plucking out its feathers. Many of the feathers land in the water and slowly drift out into the lake. I cannot see the second eagle.



Feeder Watch

By Tom Driscoll



Wow! I am writing this column while we are preparing to receive 3 to 5 inches of snow. The birds know the bad weather is coming and they are stocking up. I have filled all my feeders twice today already! I am putting out a lot of mixed seed containing peanuts sunflower and safflower seeds, nyjer for the American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins, and millet on the ground for the ground feeders. My Pine Siskins number greater than 30, although it is hard to count them as they fly in and out so often. They were not here last year, but they “irrupt” into our region once every few years, depending on pine cone crops and food availability further north.

The Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and other migrants from the north, in addition to our resident birds such as the Northern Cardinals, Tufted Titmice, and others, are continuing to eat a lot of seed. For the coldest weather, Common Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds were coming to my seed feeders. In addition to seed, I provide several cakes of suet for my birds. I buy the kind with red pepper that deters the squirrels from eating it. Woodpeckers such as the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and the Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Eastern Bluebirds, Brown Thrashers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers, American Robins, and many other species are gobbling up the suet. Several readers have reported seeing Pine Siskins at their feeders for the first time this winter. Others have Baltimore Orioles coming to their feeders. Have you had any new birds show up at your feeders during our snow storms?

In addition to food, please try to provide water for your birds. Almost any shallow plate or bowl will work.

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 locally as well!

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

Although I discuss the birds I am seeing or those you 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 spttdrshnk@yahoo.com.



Breakfast Fit for an eagle Cont'd from Pg 3

0743 I now can see that the second eagle is perched about 40 feet up in a dead snag, directly above the eagle with the gull.

0750 Three American Crows fly in and perch on a branch about 20 feet above and to the right of the eagle with the gull. The eagle now seems to have stopped pulling out feathers and is pulling out and eating pieces of flesh.

0751 The crows fly down to the ground about 10-15 feet from the eagle. I can see no reaction from the eagle; it keeps plucking flesh from the gull.

0753 The crows fly off. They go back up to their previous branch and sit side by side watching the eagle with the gull.

0800 The crows fly back to the ground near the eagle. The second eagle is still perched up in the dead snag. The second eagle looks a bit smaller than the one eating the gull. Perhaps the smaller eagle is a male and the larger eagle eating the gull is a female.

0802 The crows are walking around on the ground within a few feet of the eagle. The eagle shows no obvious reaction to the presence of the crows.

0808 The crows fly back up to their perch and sit side by side again.

0809 The adult in the tree has turned around on its perch and is preening.

0814 The eagle in the tree has turned around on its perch again and periodically looks down at the eagle eating the gull. The crows fly off and I lose sight of them.

0816 The eagle with the gull continues to pull off pieces of flesh and eat them. It has been doing this continually since it finished plucking out the feathers. A Great Blue Heron with its neck pulled in is standing on the water's edge approximately 300 feet north of the eagle.

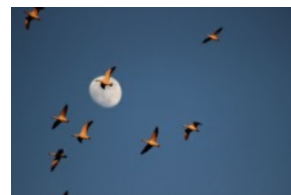
0817 The eagle in the tree has left its perch while I was watching the eagle with the gull. I cannot see it anywhere in the vicinity.

0830 The eagle with the gull is still feeding. Most of the feathers have drifted further out into the water.



My two cents cont'd from pg 2

trip was going to Pungo Lake to watch the Tundra Swans (photo by Vern Bothwell) and Snow Geese (photo by Bo Howes)--there were also a few Ross's Geese--come in to the fields for a late feed before going to roost for the night. We also saw a giant Black Bear there as well. The spectacle was amazing.



If you missed these trips, don't fret, because we have plenty of other field trips and events coming up! Keep an eye on our calendar on our website www.newhopeaudubon.org and I hope to see you at one of our field trips or events soon!

Breakfast Fit for an Eagle Cont'd from pg 5

0830 Temperature 21 °F, wind calm, clear sky. End of observation because I need to go check on the Beaver Dam eagle nest to look for breeding activity.

After finishing my other observation task, I drive back along Cheek Road. When I arrive, around 0945, there are no eagles to be seen. I cannot see any remains of the dead gull other than the feathers floating in the water.

Some speculations:

- Adult female Bald Eagles tend to be larger than adult males. Hence my speculation that the bird in the tree was a male.
- It is possible, perhaps likely, that this was a mated pair. This is the time of year that eagles begin nesting. I have already seen several pairs in tandem flight, typical of courtship behavior leading to egg laying.
- I did not see the actual capture of the gull, but there are two possible scenarios as to what happened. Perhaps the female caught the gull, killed it, and then ate it. But it is also possible that the male caught the gull, killed it, and then presented it to the female, thus helping to cement the breeding bond between the two. He then perched in the tree overhead and watched his mate consume the prey.



Calendar of Activities



Tue, March 3, 6:45 pm-8:00 pm: Wild Ideas for Getting Outside reception

At The Frontier, Park Offices Dr. at Hwy. 54 in Research Triangle Park.

This event is free and open to the public, but registration is required. For more info:

<http://www.triangleland.org/news-and-events/event/wild-ideas-for-getting-outside>

Thu, March 5, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm: Planting for pollinators, NHAS Monthly Meeting

At the North Carolina Botanical Garden.

Debbie Roos will discuss how to attract pollinators to your garden. Free and open to the public.

Sat, March 7, 9 am: Stream Watch

John Kent will lead the New Hope Creek Stream Watch monitoring. John leads a team that conducts monthly monitoring of the pollutants and microorganisms in the creek to gauge water quality. If interested in participating, then please contact John at jnkent25@gmail.com.

Sat, March 7, 2 pm-3 pm: Art exhibit and lecture by James Prosek

Plus community table event from 1 pm to 2 pm.

At the NC Museum of Art in Raleigh (East Building, Museum Auditorium).

Often described as a contemporary Audubon, James Prosek interprets and depicts the natural world through the lens of his personal experiences. Event is free but you should get tickets. More info here:

http://ncartmuseum.org/calendar/event/2015/03/07/artist_lecture_james_prosek/1400

Sun, March 8, 1 pm -4 pm: Exploring Light Technologies

At Duke University in Durham, NC.

Includes displays on how birds see light which relates to the prevention of bird strikes on windows. Free and open to the public. For more information: <http://www.fitzpatrick.duke.edu/march8>

Sat, March 14, 9 am - 1 pm: Clean Jordan Lake

At Haw River entrance to lake, near Seaforth Rd. – clean up of Jordan Lake with Clean Jordan Lake and Haw River Assembly groups. More info here: <http://cleanjordanlake.org/>

Sat, March 21, 5 pm - 6 pm: "End of Night?" talk by Paul Bogard

'Under the dome' in the Morehead Planetarium. Cohosted by New Hope Audubon and the Morehead Planetarium.

A starry night is one of nature's most magical wonders. Yet in our artificially lit world, most of us no longer experience true darkness. Using a blend of personal narrative, natural history, science, and astronomy, Paul Bogard, author of "End of Night," shares the importance of darkness--what we've lost, what we still have, and what we might regain--and the simple ways we can reduce the brightness of our nights tonight.

Free and open to the public.



Calendar of Activities Continued from page 7

Sun, March 22, 7:00am-10:00am

Tom Driscoll will lead a bird walk looking for early spring migrants. Meet at the Wild Bird Center, Eastgate Shopping Center parking lot in Chapel Hill. The hiking will be easy. Wear sturdy shoes and bring water and snacks. If you plan on attending, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrshnk@yahoo.com. Birdwatchers of all skill levels are welcome!

Thur, April 2, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm: Does This Bird Need Saving? NHAS Monthly Meeting

At the North Carolina Botanical Garden, Chapel Hill.

Pamela Bayne from the Triangle Wildlife Rehab Center will present information on how to identify what birds need to be rescued, and the role of a wildlife rehabilitation center.

Sat, April 4, 7 am – 10 am: Bird Walk

Tom Driscoll will lead a bird walk looking for spring migrants. Meet at the Wild Bird Center, Eastgate Shopping Center parking lot in Chapel Hill. The hiking will be easy. Wear sturdy shoes and bring water and snacks. If you plan on attending, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrshnk@yahoo.com. Birdwatchers of all skill levels are welcome!

Sat, April 4, 9 am: Stream Watch

John Kent will lead the New Hope Creek Stream Watch monitoring. John leads a team that conducts monthly monitoring of the pollutants and microorganisms in the creek to gauge water quality. If interested in participating, then please contact John at jnkent25@gmail.com.

Sat, April 11, 10 am-3 pm UNC Science Expo

At the University of North Carolina, East Cameron Avenue.

Co-sponsored by Town of Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation.

Celebrate science at UNC with exhibits, booths, hands-on activities, lab tours, live entertainment, food trucks, and more. Stop by the New Hope Audubon Booth and say hello!

For more info: <http://moreheadplanetarium.org/things-to-do/special-activities/unc-science-expo>

Sun, April 12, 7:00 am – 8:30 am Eagle Count

New Hope Audubon Society does quarterly eagle counts at Jordan Lake, and we need people to help out. Beginners or experts are welcome. If you are interested, please contact Steve McMurray at steve.mcmurray@ncdenr.gov.

Sun, May 3. Jordan Lake Spring Bird Count

Visit our website for more information: www.newhopeaudubon.org



Education Committee Activities

The newly formed education committee met for the first time in January, 2015, to brainstorm ideas for educational offerings for the upcoming year. Committee members include Maria de Bruyn, Tom Driscoll, Mary George, Tom Griffin, Sasha Konkel, Peggy Maslow, Pat Reid, Tommy Richie, Carol Ripple and Carol Tuskey.

One of the first projects the committee will tackle will be updating and developing new educational materials for children to be used at booths, children's programs and events. The committee also plans to collect artifacts from nature for children's hands-on experiences. The committee asks for help from the membership in donating interesting objects from nature that can be used for these hands-on experiences.

Ideas generated by the committee that are in the formative stages include the potential for partnering with the Chapel Hill Public Library in developing a program about birds for children; developing a children's photo exhibit project; and developing a Facebook presence about birding geared to children. The committee applauds the educational programs that Tom Driscoll has offered in the past to children in the schools and enthusiastically supports this continued effort.

Eagle Count by Steve McMurray

Can you identify an eagle or would you like to develop your skills in doing so? How about enjoying 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! If you are interested and new to our count, we will pair you at one of our manned locations with a seasoned volunteer. This is a great citizen science project and a great way to keep track of our magnificent bird right in our backyard.

Looking back on our last count on January 11, 2014, we had eight sites manned (out of 18), around the lake with a total of 11 volunteers!! We saw 5 adult eagles and 14 immatures for a total of 19 eagles. A great day but very cold! Two highlights being one observer watched a pair of eagles mate and another counted over 50 eagles at the dam! Grand total of eagles for the day 69! Seven out of eight locations spotted eagles. Just think, you are almost guaranteed to see an eagle if you participate! Counts take place every 2nd Sunday of every quarter. Next two counts will take place on April 12th and July 12th from 7:00 – 8:30am.

Our goal is to have most, if not all, the 18 locations around the lake manned. 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.



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 Co-Chairs	Mary George & Anne Dayer
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		