

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol 40 No 3 May/June 2015

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



My Two Cents Worth

by Tom Driscoll

I am leaving for a birding trip to Brazil soon and I have been studying the “Field Guide to the Birds of Brazil” by Ber van Perlo. In addition to having a painting, field marks, description, how to differentiate from similar birds, and range map for each bird, the guide book has loads of other information to help you find and identify birds. Although we most often jump right into the bird pictures and the associated bird-related data, we sometimes don’t bother to look at the information at the front of the book! This guide has data, such as the parts of the bird and definition of the terms, common to most guide books. There is also a brief description of each family of birds. We have a chance to see Rheas, Seriemas, Screamers, Trumpeters, and many, many other families that do not occur in the U. S.

In addition to the bird information, this book has a description of the country and, more importantly, a description of the different types of vegetation and habitats and the birds that prefer these habitats. For example, we are going to the Pantanal, described as a seasonal wetland, in the southwestern part of Brazil. There is a brief description of the vegetation we will encounter there. There is a detailed description of the 14 major natural vegetation types. There is a discussion of the geomorphology and topography as well as the climate of Brazil. We are not going during the rainy season, thank goodness!

I encourage you to look at the beginning of your bird guide to see if there might be information that you could use to find and identify the birds here in the N.C. Piedmont. What’s in your bird guide?

Help in the Garden

by Norm Budnitz



It was a beautiful spring day last week, redbuds were blooming, and I was weeding our potato patch. The henbit and chickweed were making a run for it, trying to spread into the potato beds. Though the potato plants themselves are vigorous, there’s no sense letting those weeds crowd them and steal the nutrients we have worked so hard to get incorporated into the soil. So there I was, with my trusty hoe, scratching the soil.

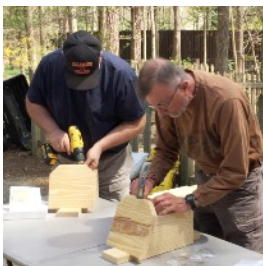
As the sun climbed higher in the sky, the heat and humidity were building. I had been at it awhile, and my shoulder hurt and my back was starting to ache. Age takes its toll. I was nearing the end of the first hundred-foot row, when I stood up to arch



This Team Is for the Birds!

by Tom Griffin

On a beautiful spring afternoon, the team of Norm Budnitz, Vern Bothwell, Tom Driscoll and I gathered at Tom's house to finish the assembly of bird boxes for Brown-headed Nuthatches and Eastern Bluebirds. As the scent of newly blooming spring flowers wafted through the air and joyful birds sang their sweet songs, we installed excluder plates to the holes, branded the boxes with the name and web address of the New Hope Audubon Society and inserted information sheets about the birds we were providing "homes" to.



Vern and Tom add the excluder plates to nest boxes on a beautiful Saturday afternoon.

Eastern Bluebirds are cavity dwellers and had declined due to loss of suitable nesting locations. The initiative to place nest boxes for them has resulted in a recovery, but they still need our help. Loss of habitat due to logging and development and the use of pesticides and herbicides continue to threaten these beautiful and beneficial birds.

If you've ever watched Bluebirds for a few minutes, you know that they consume a large number of insects. Having a nest box on your property will attract the bluebirds to it and they will reward you by keeping the insect population down.



Bluebirds use the boxes for more than just building a nest and raising a few young. In fact, Bluebirds will use the nest box to raise as many as three broods of young each spring and summer. Additionally, the birds will use the boxes for shelter from severe weather, and during cold weather, they will pack into the boxes to benefit from each other's body heat.

Norm puts the New Hope Audubon Society brand to 100 boxes.



Help in the Garden, cont'd from pg 1

my back and then lean on my hoe for bit. And there they were, a pair of Chipping Sparrows, pecking in the dirt just a few feet away. I stood there quietly as they went about their business, searching for weed seeds in the broken earth. They seemed oblivious to my presence, so soon I went back to my job. And there we were, working side by side. I was killing weeds; they were eating seeds that would otherwise become future weeds. A delightful partnership.

A cloud passed in front of the sun, and a slight breeze cooled my skin. My toil seemed a lot less toilsome. My aches seemed a lot less achy. And life was good.

New Hope Audubon Board Adopts New Mission Statement

By Carole Ripple, Director at Large

After much thought and even more deliberation the Board has adopted a revised mission statement: *The mission of the New Hope Audubon Society is to promote the conservation and enjoyment of birds, other wildlife, and ecosystems, focusing on Chatham, Durham, and Orange counties.*

Why modify a mission statement? Generally speaking, it's a good idea for organizations to revisit their guiding documents from time to time and in this case we sought a shorter statement to communicate the who, what, and where that drives us. A mission statement can't (and shouldn't try to) capture all the details of what an organization is or does, but it should be enough of a sound bite to convey what's important. A good mission statement provides members with a common, easily stated purpose that they can in turn use to tell others what we're about.

Noting how NHAS has grown and changed since the previous statement was created, Board President Tom Driscoll said he was glad the board revisited it "because the NHAS has changed and it was time to have our mission statement reflect our changes."

The mission statement is only the most recent product of the Board's strategic planning activities. In addition, we've homed in on seven strategic priorities: providing education for all ages; increasing and engaging the membership; fundraising; collaborating with other entities; promoting bird friendly communities; and engaging in advocacy. It's an ambitious agenda for the year, but the board members' combined energy and expertise—and the essential involvement of our membership!—are making impressive progress.



Feeder Watch

By Tom Driscoll



The temperatures are finally warming up and the trees are blooming! Some migrants have returned as well. I have seen Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers come through the area. They are one of the first migrants to return each year. They are also one of the smallest birds in North Carolina at 4 inches or so. Some of my winter visitors are still here though and continuing to eat a lot of seed and suet. The Yellow-rumped Warblers, are beginning to molt into their yellow and black breeding plumage. They are also practicing their songs now. I am still feeding seed to other winter-only residents such as Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and Pine Siskins. The Pine Siskins are continuing to eat a lot of nyjer (thistle) seed. These visitors should be leaving soon. When they leave, I find that the other birds do not eat as much nyjer. The American Goldfinches will eat some, but not as much. When the juncos and sparrows leave, I then put out less millet and I quit putting it on the ground.

I have not yet seen Ruby-throated Hummingbirds this month, but they have been reported here in our area. Have you put out your feeders yet? Remember to clean them often, especially during the warmer weather. Are your hummingbirds coming to your feeders? Every year, I have hummingbirds come and I look for their nests. Have you ever found a hummingbird nest?

Have your birds molted into their breeding plumage yet? The male American Goldfinches are starting to molt into their bright yellow plumage! It is fascinating how fast this transformation from drab to stunning occurs. Most of the birds in my yard are singing away all day now as well, although most of my birds have started to nest or have, at least, paired up. The woodpeckers are “drumming” and are filling up daily on suet. I can’t keep it stocked fast enough for them. The crows and the grackles are also fond of the suet.

I put up a Brown-headed Nuthatch nesting box on a Loblolly Pine tree in my yard early this month and a Carolina Chickadee built a nest in it! My bluebirds are nesting in one of the New Hope Audubon Society bluebird houses. The New Hope Audubon Society is selling both Brown-headed Nuthatch and Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes for only \$15. It is not too late to get yours and put them up and have bluebirds and nuthatches nesting in your yard! If you want one or two, then please contact me at spttdrshnk@yahoo.com and I will deliver them!

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 spttdrshnk@yahoo.com.



Bird-Friendly Habitat Certification



To encourage and guide you in the process of creating bird-friendly habitats, New Hope Audubon is launching a **Bird-Friendly Habitat Certification** program. Details will appear on our website at newhopeaudubon.org the first week in May, and the official launch will be at our membership meeting on May 7. There will be 3 levels of certification: Silver, Gold, and Platinum. We will do an on-site evaluation of your property, and if you qualify, you will receive a Certified Bird-Friendly Habitat sign and certificate. There will be a fee of \$50 to participate in the program.

Qualifying for certification will be based on having a sufficient level of native plants, removing certain invasive plant species, and adopting other bird-friendly practices. Details about what is needed to qualify at each certification level will be given in our Bird-Friendly Habitat Brochure which will be available on our website in May and also handed out at the May meeting.

Don't want certification but still want to improve your habitat? Looking at our brochure and website will give you a lot of ideas how to proceed. It is easy to improve the habitat for birds in your yard, at your business, or in any public or private outdoor space. You don't have to do it all at once; instead you can take one step at a time. For instance, get started by adding a native plant to your yard or removing an invasive plant.



This team is for the birds cont'd from pg 2

Brown-headed Nuthatches are also in decline because of urbanization and deforestation. They are a high-priority species for conservation in the Piedmont area. As much as man has had a hand in their decline, we can help their comeback by providing nesting cavities. Their normal nesting location is in cavities in dead trees in pine forests. The use of nest boxes is a suitable substitute for their natural nesting holes. The Brown-headed Nuthatch boxes have a much smaller hole to prevent other species of birds from sneaking in and using the box for nesting.

Brown-headed Nuthatches make a squeaky sound, similar to a rubber ducky squeaky toy. They are fun to watch, as they will get a seed from your feeder, then fly off to a safe perch to crack it open and eat it before coming back for more.

You can support the health of both populations of birds by placing both kinds of boxes in your yard. Just be sure to place them no less than 15 feet apart. Both boxes should be placed in open or semi-open habitat. Nuthatch boxes should be placed in areas with their preferred pine trees nearby. Both should be protected by predator guards to keep snakes and mammals away from the eggs and the young.



We have many boxes ready for you to place in your yard to attract nuthatches and bluebirds.

The New Hope Audubon Society began selling these boxes in 2002 when Robin Moran initiated the program. Since then, we have sold over 1000 of these boxes. These boxes are built by volunteers under the leadership of Frank Newell in Warrenton, NC, by Frank's organization, the Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group. These are high quality houses that will last for many years.



Calendar of Activities



Sat, May 2, 7 am- 10 am: Bird walk with Tom Driscoll

Tom 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 long pants, sturdy shoes and bring water and snacks. If you plan on attending, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com. Birdwatchers of all skill levels are welcome!

Sat, May 2, 9 – 10 am: Stream Watch with John Kent

John 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.

Sun, May 3: Jordan Lake Spring Bird Count

The New Hope Audubon Society sponsors the annual spring bird count at Jordan Lake. If you are interested in participating, please contact Carol Chelette, our count organizer (by email at: cncbrdr@yahoo.com or at: 919-797-1222). All participants must sign up with Carol. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.newhopeaudubon.org/birdCounts.html>

Thu, May 7, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm: “Create a Pollinator Paradise!”

NHAS Monthly Meeting at the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill
Chatham County Agricultural Extension Agent Debbie Roos will give an overview of North Carolina pollinators and discuss the role of native bees and managed bees in crop pollination. She will instruct us about the principles of planting a pollinator garden and how to select trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, herbs, and vines to attract a diversity of pollinators. Debbie will emphasize native plants but also include a few other plants that provide good resources. She will give a virtual tour of her demonstration pollinator garden in Pittsboro.

Sat, May 9, Chapel Hill Spring Bird Count

The Chapel Hill Bird Club sponsors the spring bird count in Chapel Hill. To sign up, please e-mail Will Cook at: cwcook@duke.edu



Calendar of Activities Continued from page 7

Sat, June 6, 9 am – 10 am: Stream Watch with John Kent

John 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, June 6, 7 am- 10 am: Bird walk with Tom Driscoll

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

Pollinator Series

This summer from June to September, the North Carolina Botanical Garden will launch a series of lectures, workshops, and discussions on pollinator importance to our ecosystems and health including human nutrition and food security, the threats to our pollinators and how humans can be involved to help. An exhibit on bees and their special role will open in June at the UNC Botanical Garden Visitor Center. To find out more about lectures and activities for the family, please visit <http://ncbg.unc.edu>.

May and June, 2015. Bird Walks

There is a field trip on May 2, 7:00am. Meet at the Wild Bird Center, Eastgate Shopping Center in Chapel Hill parking lot. We will be out for 2 to 3 hours looking for winter birds and early migrants. The location is to be determined. The hiking will be easy. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and bring water and snacks. If you plan on attending, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com. Birdwatchers of all skill levels are welcome!

There is a bird walk on June 6, 7:00am. Meet at the Wild Bird Center, Eastgate Shopping Center Chapel Hill parking lot. We will be out for 2 to 3 hours looking and listening for the nesting birds. The location is to be determined. The hiking will be easy. Wear sturdy shoes and bring water and snacks. If you plan on attending, then please contact Tom Driscoll at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com. Birdwatchers of all skill levels are welcome!



Educational Committee Activities

The education committee has been busy updating and developing interactive educational experiences for children to be used at booths and fairs. At the recent UNC Science Expo event, two updated bird I.D. games were a big hit. Additionally, 75 children were delighted to make pinecone bird feeders, a somewhat messy but very rewarding project. A new insect photo collage, developed by Maria deBruyn, was also available for viewing.

The committee is currently in the process of developing educational learning centers focusing on “what makes a bird a bird” including topics such as feathers, flight, migration, bird song, beaks and feeding, and habitats and nesting among others. We will be partnering with the Chapel Hill Public Library to present educational programs for children about birds where these learning centers will be used.

Thank you NHAS members who have donated artifacts from nature to use in the displays we are developing! We have gathered an interesting assortment of skulls, bones, exoskeletons, rocks and other interesting artifacts which will be displayed in our new display cases which are currently being constructed.

Other projects are in the pipeline and our enthusiastic committee (Carol Tuskey, Tommy Richey, Tom Griffin, Pat Reid, Maria deBruyn, Tom Driscoll and Mary George) are open to suggestions from the membership.

Eagle Count by Steve McMurray

What a great day! It was a beautiful morning with lots of sunshine and temperatures in the 50s. We had 7 sites manned with 14 volunteers. We saw a total of 32 eagles and there was only one site that did not see an eagle (Vista Point #17).

Next Count: July 12th, 2015 7:00 – 8:30a.m.



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
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		