

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

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<http://www.newhopeaudubon.org>



My Two Cents Worth

by Tom Driscoll

My second tenure as president of the New Hope Audubon Society (NHAS) is ending soon and I want to reflect a little on my two years in office. Although I didn't get as much done as I had hoped, we accomplished quite a bit during my term. We helped fund and build the Mason Farm boardwalk several years ago, but a big flood moved much of it late last year, so we helped fix and better support it. The system of trails at the Eagle Viewing Platform site were extended and improved in the past two years. More benches were put up by Boy Scouts and soon we will have even more. If you haven't ever been there lately, then I encourage you to visit our eagle viewing platform and the surrounding trails!

The Board of Directors was revitalized with many new members whose energy and talents have resulted in several new and exciting ventures for the NHAS! We have a vibrant Education Committee chairperson who has the group doing all kinds of children's programs with games and quizzes. We have a Conservation Committee that has built or is building several Chimney Swift towers. We have a Bird-Friendly Subcommittee that is speaking to many groups about the merits of planting native plants. This group has also initiated a program to assess yards and gardens for their native plants; this program was initiated to encourage our membership and others to plant native plants and try to remove invasives. (See Norm Budnitz's article in this newsletter.) We have a field trip chairperson and other board members who have instituted regular Wednesday bird walks and increased the number of weekend bird walks and trips that have created a buzz with our membership and increased participation! And our Program Director has had great speakers at all of our Membership Meetings; the attendance at these meetings has increased as a result. We will also soon be unveiling our newly redesigned website. All this, while continuing our regular work such as Stream Watch, Eagle Count, and our normal activities.

I thank the Board of Directors and volunteers for all of their great work to make the NHAS so great and so much fun! I leave with a hope that we continue our working and advocating for the environment and nature in Chatham, Durham, and Orange Counties, and I look forward to working with Bo Howes, the new president, to make these things happen!

I'm Certified

By Norm Budnitz

"The New Hope Audubon Society has a program called Bird Friendly Habitat Certification. Last week, four intrepid explorers—Jim George, Marcia Mandel, Pete Schubert, and Ben Skelton—came out to look over my 13 acres in central Orange County. In actuality, they didn't need to be intrepid. The poison ivy was just barely emerging, and the ticks and chiggers kept a low profile on a cool and pleasant spring day.

The goal of the group, at my request (and my \$50 donation to New Hope Audubon), was to assess my property to see how bird friendly it was. So what makes for bird friendliness you ask? The answer is different depending on the size of the property. In my case, we looked for a diversity of habitats as judged by the resident plants. I live out in the country, so my assessment would be different from that of a half-acre lot in town. We spent a couple of hours walking around the various nooks and crannies, fields and forests, streams and hedgerows I am fortunate to have responsibility for.



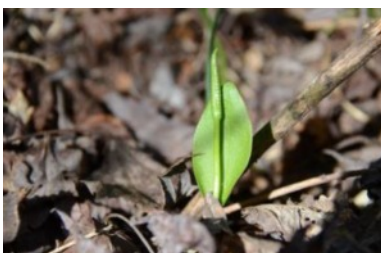
I'm Certified cont'd from pg 1

As a biologist/naturalist by training myself, I already had a pretty good grasp of what I had, but it was wonderful to see what was so familiar to me through the eyes of other thoughtful, observant, and interested people. It's important to note that the homeowner does not need to have any expertise to take part in this program. The visitors are very knowledgeable and will explain things as they go. We found lots of positives and some negatives—luckily, not too many of the latter. According to the detailed report they sent me, here's what we found:

The lay of the land. My 13 acres are divided up as follows: woods-7, meadow/open woods-4, agricultural field-1, and yard-1. My woods are separated from my neighbors' woods by a small, but permanent stream. Although I mow my yard and meadow, many of the grasses that I see over the course of the summer are actually native species. I do not have a plush green lawn, soaked in herbicides. I mow for ease of access and to keep down those pesky ticks and chiggers. My agricultural acre is being farmed by a young couple who grow produce for Weaver Street Market, the Durham Food Coop, several local restaurants, and a CSA. The CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) supplies 20 households with about \$25 worth of produce each week throughout the spring, summer, and fall months. We call it Red's Quality Acre.

The positives. My forest and open woods have a very nice diversity of native canopy trees—black walnut, red and sugar maples, persimmon, southern magnolia, red, white, and willow oaks, sweetgum, tulip poplar, black cherry, beech, green ash, various hickories, and Virginia and loblolly pines. And in the understory there are fringe trees, deciduous holly, redbud, pawpaw, red cedar, sourwood, sumacs, dogwood, and sassafras. The shrub layer includes hearts-a-bustin', pinxter azalea, chokecherry, and American beautyberry and Clethra that I have planted. I also have native vines—virgin's bower, greenbriar, poison ivy, fox grape, and trumpet vine. I realize it may be boring to read a long list like this, but I'm kind of proud of the diversity on my small piece of the North Carolina Piedmont.

Mixed reviews. Unfortunately, the herbaceous layer on my property gets mixed reviews. We found several native grasses, two orchids (crane fly and rattlesnake), bluets, goldenrods, some sedges and rushes in the wet areas, and assorted ferns (more on them below). The mixed reviews are the result of the white-tailed deer population in my neighborhood. When I walk into my forest, I can see the browse line. A forest like this should have a fair bit of undergrowth, but the deer keep it mowed and browsed down. For example, my neighbor used to have about a quarter acre patch of pink lady slippers (orchids). All gone. I used to find a few morel mushrooms. All gone. I used to have Ovenbirds (ground nesters) breeding in the leaf litter. All gone. (Those beautiful deer are happy to eat eggs of ground nesters if they stumble over a nest.)



The ferns are a particular love of mine. I'm fortunate to have a nice diversity—Christmas, lady, sensitive, grape, and rattlesnake ferns. But a real surprise for me, and the highlight of the day, was when the crew found a small patch of adder's tongue ferns. We found these growing in a hedgerow under thick vegetation at the top of a seep (where water seeps out of the earth from higher ground), probably a place where the deer simply could not get at them. These ferns look different from 'typical' ferns, having one oblong photosynthetic leaf and, rising out of it, one fertile leaf that produces the spores for reproduction. (See photo.) Being a fern lover from way back, I was thrilled to see these guys on my property.



Feeder Watch

By Tom Driscoll



Spring is here; the temperatures are finally warming up and the trees are blooming! I saw my first Ruby-throated Hummingbird today. A bright male was feeding on my deciduous “pinxter” azaleas. I have had my hummingbird feeders up for about 10 days. Are your hummingbirds coming to your feeders? If you haven’t put your hummingbird feeders up yet, please clean them well with minimal soap or detergent and rinse well. Remember to use 1 part sugar and 4 parts water for your hummingbird sugar solution. No red dye is needed and is actually bad for the hummingbirds, so please don’t put dye in your sugar solution.

I also noticed the neighborhood Cooper’s Hawk atop my platform feeder today. Cooper’s (and Sharp-shinned) Hawks are smallish, long-tailed hawks that eat birds primarily. So when you’re feeding birds, you are also “feeding” predators such as hawks. This bothers some, but I believe hawks are part of the food chain and also need to eat. How do you feel about “feeding” hawks?

I have heard and seen some spring migrants, although some of the winter visitors, such as White-throated Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers, are still here and are still dining at my feeders. The Dark-eyed Juncos have left. Have you heard them practicing their songs?

Have your birds molted into their breeding plumage yet? Most of mine have and the male goldfinches look especially yellow this year! 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, and many 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.

My bluebirds are nesting in one of the New Hope Audubon Society bluebird houses, but still no Brown-headed Nuthatches in my nuthatch nesting box. 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.



NHAS Membership Meeting Speakers for 2016

Our membership meetings are held in the Visitor Education Center at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens, 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!

Time/Date	Speaker	Topic
7:00 pm May 5, 2016	Norm Budnitz New Hope Audubon Society	Birds—What are they? Who are they? What do they do?

Calendar of Activities

Thurs May 5, 7:00 - 8:30pm: "Birds What are they? Who are they?What do they do?, Norm Budnitz

NHAS Monthly Meeting at the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill.

Sat May 7, 9:00am: 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 Note, because start time and place may change based on regular crew availability, new folks interested should send John an email by Wednesday, 5/4/16.

Sat Jun 4, 9:00am: 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 Note, because start time and place may change based on regular crew availability, new folks interested should send John an email by Wednesday, 6/1/16.



NHAS Education Committee News

by Mary George

Our Family Bird Walk at Riverwalk in Hillsborough, NC on April 16, 2016 was a fun success. Fifteen children accompanied by family members, one well-behave family dog, and NHAS volunteers walked the trails and identified 12 birds. After a few minutes, the children could quickly differentiate between a Turkey Vulture and a Black Vulture. Children put stars next to birds they saw in their bird ID booklet and received a NHAS bird pin at the end of the walk. Thanks NHAS members Tommy Richey, Tom Driscoll, Vern Bothwell, Karen Macaulay, Carol Tuskey and Mary George for making the walk possible.

Children were able to use loaner binoculars during the walk. If you have old binoculars you would be willing to donate for these family bird walks, they would be greatly appreciated. Just bring them to a membership meeting and they will be put to good use!



We are happy to announce that Tommy Richey has agreed to serve as co-chair of the Education Committee! Thanks Tommy for agreeing to serve in this role. We are also happy to announce that, due to the effort of member Vern Bothwell, we have state and federal permits to collect and display items such as bird nests and feathers, which will be used for teaching and display at educational events. If you are able to donate items, member Pat Reid is cataloging items and will need the name of the person donating, the item donated, and the location and year of collection.



I'm Certified cont'd from pg 2

The negatives. There were some negative findings—Japanese honeysuckle, of course, a few multiflora roses, some Chinese privet, and Japanese stiltgrass. (See photo.) But that was it. No wisteria, no English ivy, no kudzu. No tree of heaven, mimosa, or Bradford pear. These non-native invasive plants can wreak havoc. They can overwhelm native species. They don't support native insects that serve as essential foods for our native birds and mammals. And though some provide fruits, when the birds eat them, the seeds get passed through and deposited in their droppings and thus spread further afield. Bad. Bad, bad. I've been keeping a watch out for these invasives over the years, killing them whenever I find them. I've done a pretty good job with the roses and privets, but the stiltgrass and the honeysuckle give me fits. Ah well, I do the best I can.



Want to get your yard certified? Go to our [New Hope Audubon Society website](#) and read all about it. I have been working on my property for about 30 years, but you may be starting from scratch, trying to rehabilitate a patch of land with lots of invasives. Have no fear. The experts are there to give excellent advice. And they will come back for future visits if you need them. Multiple visits, a detailed report, a certificate, and I am displaying my Bird Friendly Habitat Certification plaque with pride. I was pleased to make my donation. (Now to go after more of that &#x26;#x26; stiltgrass)



New Hope Audubon Officers for 2016-2017

President	Bo Howes		
Vice President	Mark Kosiewski	Director	Pam Timmons
Treasurer	Vern Bothwell	Director	John Kent
Secretary	Pat Reid	Director	Jim George

Committee Chairs and Special Projects

Archivist - Tommy Richey

Bird Friendly Habitat Certification -
Jim George, Barbara Driscoll

Important Bird Area, Jordan Lake -
Jennifer Fenwick

Important Bird Area Eno River -
Tom Driscoll

Bird Seed Sale - Mary George

Eagle Count - Steve McMurray

Christmas & Spring Bird Counts -
Norm Budnitz

Conservation Chair -Mark Kosiewski

Field Trip Chair- David Anderson

Hospitality Chair - Jill Paul

Membership Chair - Anne Dayer

Newsletter Editor - Pat Reid

Program Chair: -Mark Kosiewski

Publicity Chair - Caroline Gilmore

Education Chair - Mary George,
Tommy Richey

Stream Watch - John Kent

Webmasters - Norm Budnitz, Jim
George

Wildlife Observation Platform - Bo
Howes