

New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter

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<http://www.newhopeaudubon.org>



Notes from the President

by Bo Howes

POTUS... FLOTUS... SCOTUS... PNHAS?

What do all these imposing acronyms mean? President of the United States, First Lady of the United States, Supreme Court of the United States, and President of New Hope Audubon. Clearly we are running in fine company. Personally, it seems PNHAS more closely resembles Pinhead than some high falutin' title of grandeur. But it does beg the question, what does it mean to be President of New Hope Audubon Society? I clearly don't do all the work, I try not to take all the credit, and I certainly am not the most accomplished birder among our number.

I see the President of New Hope Audubon as a sort of "corraller" in chief. I preside over board and membership meetings. I ask people to do things for New Hope Audubon: be committee chairs, run for a director or officer position, or volunteer at an event. But mostly, I get to help good people realize a vision for our little Audubon Chapter. Before my tenure we have had great projects, the Barn Owl Project, the Chimney Swift Towers at Sandy Creek Park and other locations, and the Bird Friendly Habitat Certification Program to name just a few. What will be the new projects for this year? We are already knee deep in the Saving our Birds Program with the NC Botanical Garden. We have as active a field trip calendar as we have had in recent memory. Programs for our Membership Meetings are diverse and feature much sought after speakers.

I am very excited about the coming year and what it will bring for New Hope Audubon. As mentioned above, I ask people to do things for New Hope Audubon... so if you see me coming get ready because as I said, I don't do all the work.

PHNAS

Eastern Bluebirds

By Norm Budnitz



Bluebirds are one of the iconic species in the hearts and minds of all Americans. They are beautiful in their dazzling blue, orange, and white plumage. They are easy to see in their preference for open habitat, often perching on low branches or power lines in our neighborhoods and backyards. And as hole-nesters, they readily accept our offering of nest boxes. Their scientific name, *Sialia sialis*, derived from Greek, simply means 'a kind of bird.' How fitting! Who doesn't love a bluebird?

Happily, for those of us who live in the piedmont region of North Carolina, bluebirds are fairly common in the right habitat. Drive down any country road through farmland, and you are likely to see bluebirds. In the spring, you may see mated pairs sitting on telephone wires or fence lines. As summer progresses and babies are born, you may see family groups. And in the fall and winter, the



Cont'd Eastern Bluebirds

numbers swell even further as our resident birds are joined by bluebirds moving south from further north.

Bluebirds are insectivorous and frugivorous. Most people know that insectivorous means that they eat bugs. Frugivorous (nice word, don't you think?) means that they also eat fruit. This is particularly true for bluebirds in the fall and winter when fruits like wild grapes and dogwood berries are abundant and insects are harder to find. As insectivores, bluebirds are different from other bug eaters like flycatchers, warblers, or woodpeckers. Instead of sallying out from a perch to snatch a flying insect in the air like a flycatcher or digging into a tree like a woodpecker, bluebirds specialize in eating insects that live on the ground. Perhaps this belies their being in the thrush family, most of whom are also ground feeders. But instead of hopping around on the ground like robins, they perch on a tree limb or telephone line in a characteristically 'hunched over' posture, scanning the ground for some creepy-crawly morsel moving around in the grass. Like hawks, they must have pretty good eyesight to see their tiny prey from above. When they do find something, they fly down and snatch their meal from the tangle of vegetation.

There are many blue birds in the world, but there is no blue pigment in any of their feathers. Unlike many other feather colors (yellows, reds, greens, etc.) that get their color from chemical pigments, blue feathers get their color structurally. That is, they act like prisms, separating the white light that hits them and reflecting the blue back to us. The photo at the top of the page shows a male bluebird in all his stunning blueness. The light is hitting him in such a way that it reflects the intense blue wavelengths back to the camera (or our eyes). The

photo below shows a bluebird with the light coming from behind it. That 'transmitted' light is not changed by the feather structure, and so the 'blue' instead looks gray.



Photo by William Majoros

It was long thought that bluebirds were monogamous, with mated pairs staying together for life. And scientists have found evidence that adult offspring of a pair sometimes 'help' raise their parents' later broods. This monogamy and cooperative breeding appealed to American sensibilities of stable family life. However, it is now known through DNA analysis, that 'monogamous' females do breed with other males besides their mates. So the male in the family may actually be helping to raise young that are not his biological offspring. And females occasionally lay their eggs in the nests of other bluebird pairs (called egg dumping), so some females also raise babies who are not their own. In addition, bluebirds have often been portrayed as sweet and gentle. Their song is soft and pleasant, and both males and females sing. Well, that picture of peace and tranquility is not really true. Both males and females will fight with interlopers in order to defend their territories and nest cavities, wounding and even killing their opponents. So much for the "Bluebird of Happiness" and "Somewhere over the rainbow, bluebirds fly" from the Wizard of Oz. Sorry if I burst your bubble.

On the other hand, in the conservation movement, bluebirds are a success story. Their numbers declined during the first half of the 20th century as a result of pesticides, invasive bird species, and changes in land use practices. Pesticides like DDT sickened or even killed bluebirds outright. When these pesticides are sprayed on fields,



Feeder Watch

By Tom Driscoll



Today (August 4), I watched as a Carolina Wren bathed in a saucer of sand that we put out. Birds use the sand to rid themselves of mites. I recommend putting out a plate or shallow bowl of sand for your birds. I also watched a Brown Thrasher take a bath in our little pond. Providing a water feature (as simple as a plate) will help birds remove mites and ticks as well. Sadly, I have a juvenal Mourning Dove coming to my platform that has a engorged tick near its left eye. Occasionally, I see birds with ticks and wonder whether they survive.

There is a lot of hummingbird activity in my yard! The juvenal birds are chasing each other around the garden to protect their feeders from intruders. They are also chasing other hummingbirds away from the salvia, Cardinal flowers, and other plants that are in bloom. We have planted a lot of native flowering plants for hummingbirds and other pollinators. We have a native plant and yard certification committee now that promotes the use of native plants for pollinators. For more information, see <http://www.newhopeaudubon.org/birdFriendlyNatives.html>.

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!



Easter Bluebirds cont'd from pg 2

Unfortunately, when bluebirds eat those weakened insects, the pesticides build up in their bodies and eventually weaken or kill them, too. In nature, tree holes can be in short supply, and thus, hole-nesting species are often in competition for select sites. With the introduction of European Starlings and House Sparrows, bluebirds found themselves in competition with two formidable and aggressive hole-nesting species. The bluebird numbers declined precipitously as a result.

Changes in land use practices present a different story. Eastern Bluebirds probably thrived in open forests like the longleaf pine savannahs that dominated much of the southeastern United States. But as those forests were clear cut and replaced with densely planted loblolly pine plantations, the open spaces needed by the bluebirds became more scarce. In more recent years, however, as the human population has increased, we have re-created more open spaces in our neighborhoods and farmlands. That is good for bluebirds, except for one thing. We tend not to like having old trees (with their tree holes) around because they present a hazard when they inevitably fall down. No tree holes, no places for bluebirds to nest. Luckily for the birds, however, people like our neighbors in Warrenton, NC, the Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group, led by Frank Newell, have been making artificial nest boxes at a prodigious rate. At last count, they have made more than 265,000 bird houses since 1989! (You can buy one from us here, if you'd like.)

Photos by Caroline Gilmore



While they may not be the exemplars of peace and tranquility we would like, bluebirds are certainly beautiful and their singing is sweet, indeed. And they do eat lots of insects. Honor them, enjoy them, and put up a bluebird house if you can.

[The above material was gleaned from: The Birds of North America and Wikipedia.]



Membership Meeting Speakers for 2016 - 2017

Date/Time	Speaker	Topic
9/1/16 6:30 pm	Pot Luck	Members slides
10/6/16 7:00 pm	John Hammond, Fish & Wildlife Biologist	"Red Cockaded Woodpecker"
11/3/16 7:00 pm	Johnny Wilson, Phd	"Birds of Cameroon"
12/1/16 7:00 pm	Brian Bockhahn, Interpretation & Education Specialist, NC State Parks	" Birds of NC State Parks 100 Years"
1/5/17 7:00 pm	TBA	TBA
2/2/17 7:00 pm	Maria Parker Sonis, photographer, writer, Chapel Hill News	"A Photographic Journal of North Carolina"
3/2/17 7:00 pm	Shilo Felton, Dept of Applied Ecology NC State Univ.	"Ecology & Conservation of American Oystercatchers"
4/6/17 7:00 pm	Steve Hall, Landscape Ecologist	"The Landscape Conservation from the Eno River to Jordan Lake"
5/4/17 7:00 pm	Lesley Starks, Plant Conservation Program, NC Dept of Agriculture	" Some Like it Hot: What happened When the Fires Stopped?"



Education Committee News



New Hope Audubon Society, serving Orange, Durham and Chatham counties in North Carolina, invites youth and their families/friends to get to know their bird neighbors through games, hands-on activities, and educational displays.



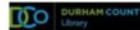
Photos by Maria de Bruyn

When: September 17, 2016 from 10:30 a.m.- noon

Where: Durham County Library, 300 N Roxboro Street, Durham, North Carolina

Contact: Olivia Singleton, 919 560-0130, durhamcountylibrary.org

Youth of all ages and their families are welcome!





Calendar of Activities

Thurs Sept 1, 6:30 - 8:30pm: NHAS Monthly Meeting at the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. Pot Luck Dinner with members showing 10 - 12 slides.

Sat Sept 3, 7:30 - 10:30 am Bird Walk with NHAS. Meet in front of the Oak Creek Shopping Center in Durham for a 2-3 hour bird walk at a nearby site.

Sat Sept 10, 8:00am: 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 a 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, 9/7/16.

Sat Sept 17, 10:30 - 12:00pm - Getting to Know Your Bird Neighbors at Durham Public Library - Main Library

Sat Sept 24, 7:30 - 10:30 am Bird Walk with NHAS. Meet at Fews Ford, Eno River State Park for a 2-3 hour bird walk.

Sat Oct 1, 9:00 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 a 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, 9/28/16.

Thurs 10/6, 7 - 8:30 pm: NHAS Membership Meeting at the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. The speaker will be John Hammond of Fish and Wildlife on "Red Cockaded Woodpecker"

Sat 10/8, 10:00am - 5:00pm: Monarch Festival at Sandy Creek Park

Sun 10/9 7:00 - 8:30am: Eagle Count with Steve McMurray. Jordan Lake - beginners and experts are welcome if interested contact Steve McMurray



New Hope Audubon Officers for 2016-2017

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

Committee Chairs and Special Projects

Archivist - Tommy Ritchey

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 Ritchey

Stream Watch - John Kent

Webmasters - Norm Budnitz, Jim
George

Wildlife Observation Platform - Bo
Howes