

Whistler

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County Newsletter

Spring 2006

Printed on recycled paper 

MARCH CHAPTER MEETING

“Recovery Efforts for the Piping Plover” on March 28th will feature Sidney Maddock’s photographs and his knowledge of the environmentally-threatened piping plovers. Last summer, Sidney worked as an Audubon field biologist monitoring the three nesting pairs present at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Formerly an attorney, Sid also has worked for the Biodiversity Legal Foundation and the Center for Biodiversity. An article on the Hatteras efforts appeared in the Fall-Winter 2005 Newsletter of N.C. Audubon.

Phil Dickinson

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| March 7 | Board Meeting: Arbor Acres clubhouse. 7:00 pm |
| March 11 | 2nd Saturday Birdwalk: Bethabara Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. |
| March 28 | Chapter Meeting: Sciworks. Sidney Maddock. Refreshments at 7:00 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m. |
| April 4 | Board Meeting: Arbor Acres Clubhouse. 7:00 p.m. |
| April 8 | 2nd Saturday Birdwalk: Civitan Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. |
| April 15 | Miller Park cleanup |
| April 25 | Chapter Meeting: Sciworks. Ken Bridle. Refreshments at 7:00 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m. |
| May 2 | Board Meeting: Arbor Acres clubhouse. 7:00 p.m. |
| May 6 | SPRING BIRD COUNT |
| May 13 | 2nd Saturday Birdwalk: Reynolda Gardens. Meet at 9:00 a.m. |
| May 23 | Chapter Meeting: Sciworks. Gray Tuttle. Refreshments at 7:00 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m. |
| June 10 | 2nd Saturday Birdwalk: Tanglewood |

UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETINGS

Dr. Ken Bridle will visit us in April for a program on “Piedmont Wildflowers.” Ken is a conservation biologist and an ecologist who is well known to many of you. Our woodlands and marshes will be spring-ing into bloom, so come learn about what attracts our area birds and bees.

In May, our own Gray Tuttle will share great photographs from his trip to the Pantanal and other parts of Brazil in 2005. Jim Martin, who has visited other areas of the Amazon basin, says he is looking forward to the show, as are the rest of us.

Phil Dickinson

SPRING FIELD TRIP

After four years, the Spring Field Trip for the ASFC returns to Huntington Beach State Park in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina. The trip is planned for April 21 through April 23, and preliminary plans call for us to visit the State Park as well as Brookgreen Gardens and other local birding hot spots. This region is known as a great area for seeing a variety of species, including wading birds and coastal migrants. We hope to see Swainson's Warblers, Bachman's Sparrows, Kites, Orioles, Tanagers, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and others.

The area is 240 miles from Winston-Salem. We are planning birding excursions on Friday morning and afternoon. Those who drive down Thursday night can join us in the morning; those who drive down Friday morning can join us in the afternoon. We will also bird together all day Saturday as well as Sunday morning, leaving Sunday afternoon to travel back home. **(continued on page 3)**



SPRING BIRD COUNT/BIRDATHON

You are invited to join the Audubon Society of Forsyth County for our annual spring bird count, and our count dinner, on Saturday, May 13. The count is scheduled to take place during migration season, a roughly three week period when our local birds are joined by a wide variety of migrating species, all in their brightest "breeding plumage." The count is the perfect opportunity for novice bird-watchers to learn about birds from our most experienced local birders. It also provides experienced birders with an opportunity to record valuable statistical information for Audubon scientists and other biologists who use current bird census data to study our environment, and the effects of human activity on our natural surroundings. Counts take place in many of our local parks; you can select a location that is convenient for you, and feel free to stay for as long or as short as you want. Those interested in participating should contact Linda Davis at 924-1751 or davisl@mindspring.com and Linda will provide you with additional details as Count Day approaches.

Following the Count, a dinner is planned to start at 6:00; the location has not yet been determined. All counters are welcome to attend, as are family and friends. The dinner gives us a chance to get together with counters from all across the county, and share stories about what was seen during the course of the day. There is no need to pre-register for the dinner; just show up and we'll find a place for you at the table!

Last but not least, the Spring Count is also ASFC's only real fund-raising event of the year. Please help ASFC continue its vitally important education and conservation efforts by contributing to the Birdathon. Half of the money raised will be used to underwrite local education efforts, including the Audubon Adventures education program. That program is geared for children in the third through sixth grades. In past years, we have sponsored Audubon Adventures programs in over 50 classrooms in Forsyth County. Money raised from this year's Birdathon will determine the number of classrooms that we can sponsor in the 2006-2007 school year. The other half of the money raised through Birdathon supports Audubon North Carolina's Coastal Sanctuaries program. That program protects globally significant habitat along the North Carolina coast. Any contribution you make is tax-deductible. You can send a specific amount (no amount is too small!) or pledge a specific amount per species identified during the Spring Count (we usually spot between 110 and 130 species). Please send your contributions (checks can be made payable to ASFC) to ASFC, P.O. Box 15111, Winston-Salem, NC 27113. If you feel strongly about Audubon's mission of education and conservation, you should encourage your friends, family and neighbors to contribute as well; their contributions truly will make a difference... for our children and for our birds.

OPERATORS ARE STANDING BY: FREE CAMPSITE GIVEAWAY!

Hanging Rock State Park is within easy driving distance of Winston-Salem, has lots of habitat and is filled each summer with lots of potential birders and advocates for our environment. The park has not yet been designated as an IBA but, with nesting Peregrine Falcons, it will be. And we, as the local Audubon chapter, have a wonderful (and easy!) opportunity to help the park, address our own needs to be good stewards of our mission, and maybe open some new eyes to birding. What we are asking is that we send a couple of people a couple of times to Hanging Rock during the summer to present a Beginning Birding Walk (red bird = cardinal) and/or an evening program at the campground amphitheater (we have a slide program already ready and waiting). No Ginzu knives, but you do get a free campsite if you choose to stay. Contact me if you're interested. Susan Jones 768-9151 sljones@triad.rr.com



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Christmas Bird Count, Audubon Society of Forsyth County, was held on Saturday, December 31, 2005. Forty hearty souls turned out for the event and found 79 species on count day (83 species were reported during last year's Christmas Bird Count) Another three species were reported during the count period. The day started briskly, but the sun soon broke through and we enjoyed a cool, spring-like day. This year's species list was a bit different than last year's. Absent this year were the Northern Pintail, Herring Gull, Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Gray Catbird and Common Yellowthroat. New species, absent from last year's count, included the Northern Bobwhite, American Coot, Redhead Duck, Palm Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird and Green Heron. A highlight this year was the count dinner, graciously hosted by Warren and Susan Jones. We enjoyed food, fellowship and ringing in the (early) New Year!

Linda Davis



NOTEWORTHY SIGHTINGS

Two ravens have been seen at last year's nest site on the RJR factory building at Fifth and Patterson. The great horned owls have returned to last year's nest at Washington Park. Other sightings include: fox sparrow at Reynolda; swamp sparrows at Civitan Park; and double-crested cormorant, horned grebes, northern shoveler and lesser scaup at Salem Lake. Other noteworthy sightings during the Christmas Bird Count included several ducks: redhead, lesser scaup, bufflehead, ring-necked, ruddy, black, hooded merganser. Also a flock of rusty blackbirds at Tanglewood, two common snipe sightings (one at Civitan), brown creepers, pileated woodpeckers, and white-crowned sparrows

Phil Dickinson

OUTER BANKS, 2006

The Martin Luther King holiday weekend provided a group of 21 chapter members an opportunity to spend a few days together roaming the Outer Banks in search of as many birds as possible. The group included many long-time members, notably C and Nancy Sommer. There were also several newer faces, including Doug and Patty Demarest, Mike Callahan and Gale Cruse, and Sharon Johnson and Paul Butler.

Royce Hough served as our guide. With his able assistance, and with the benefit of some advance information gleaned from the carolinabirds listserv, members of the group spotted 132 species over the four-day weekend. The group also spotted large numbers of raw and steamed oysters (only \$4.00 per dozen at Kelly's), and some tasty seafood (not to mention an outstanding selection of cold beers and ales) at Tortuga's Lie.

Friday was mostly a travel day but separate groups did some birding at the Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge and at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. Highlights at Alligator River included many Bald Eagles, even more Northern Harriers, a Merlin, and, at dusk, several Short-eared Owls. Ducks included Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Gadwall and thousands of Northern Pintail.

On Saturday morning, the group started south from Nags Head, stopping first at Oregon Inlet. In the harbor, we spotted several species of ducks, including Northern Pintails, Red-breasted Mergansers, and a Surf Scoter. On the west side of Highway 12, we saw a Brant and a Ruddy Turnstone. On the beach, near the abandoned Coast Guard station, most of the group got a long and close look at a Peregrine Falcon, apparently resting after a large meal. From there, we traveled south to the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. In addition to a wide variety of ducks, the group saw large flocks of Snow Geese and Tundra Swans, along with a Tricolored Heron and a Black-crowned Night-Heron. The remainder of the day was spent at the area surrounding the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Seen there were an American Bittern, a Glaucous Gull, and several Glossy Ibis. An Eared Grebe was spotted in a salt pond south of the Lighthouse, and a Lesser Black-backed Gull and a Common Loon were seen along the beach.

Sunday morning dawned clear, cold and extremely windy, not very good conditions for birding. Part of the morning was spent at the Pine Island Hunt Club north of Duck. Most of the 6600-acre property, which was recently donated to the National Audubon Society by Winston-Salem resident Earl Slick, is not yet open to the general public. We were treated to a private tour of the lodge by caretaker Jeff Davenport and had an opportunity to see some of the ducks being fed on the property. After some of us spied a roadside Sora, we spent most of Sunday afternoon at Bodie Island. The viewing platform overlooking the marsh provided yet another opportunity to see ducks at close range. There were several American Wigeon and Hooded Mergansers in addition to several species noted previously.

On Monday, the group scattered as some headed for home, and others took advantage of beautiful weather to try and find some birds that had evaded us. Many in the group finally located a rare Franklin's Gull on the west side of the Mann's Harbor Bridge. A return to Alligator River failed to produce an Ash-throated Flycatcher, but we did see a mature Golden Eagle. A final trip down to Lake Mattamuskeet was very productive: we saw Redheads, Canvasbacks, Greater Scaup, and, for some, a Black-headed Gull. In the marsh area near Wildlife Drive, we saw several Cattle Egrets. Along the Wildlife Trail, we saw many land birds including Yellow Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and both Kinglets.

Once again, the trip provided an excellent opportunity to see old friends, make new ones, and spend numerous hours enjoying the incredible scenery and wildlife of the Outer Banks. To those of you who haven't yet "taken the plunge," I encourage you to join us on our next weekend excursion.

Bill Gifford



(continued from page 1)

Because of the popularity of the area, we have been unable to book a block of rooms. However, rooms are available at the Holiday Inn Express, which is five miles south in Pawley's Island. Rates are \$99.95 per night for Friday and Saturday nights, but \$90.95 with a AAA discount and only \$84.95 with an AARP discount. Rates are even lower for those arriving on Thursday night. Since rooms there are limited, you should call right away for reservations. The number is 843-235-0808. Rooms are also available at the Brookwood Inn in Murrell's Inlet for \$45 per night. The number there is 843-651-2550. Finally, there is a Best Western further south in Pawley's Island. Rates there are \$69 on Thursday night and \$99 on the weekend, with AAA discounts available at \$63/\$82 respectively.

Those interested in making the trip should contact Bill Gifford at wgifford@triad.rr.com. Any questions can be directed to Bill at 721-0201 or 714-0333.

IN MEMORIAM

We wanted to set down a few memories of Ramona to let you know what she meant to us. We know that words cannot express how much you will miss her, because we will miss her tremendously. Here are some of the many reasons why.

The recent Salem Lake bird walk brought to mind a similar walk a few years ago when Ramona took time - in spite of the bitter cold that had her bundled like an Eskimo - to instruct a very young boy how to identify a Ruddy Duck. I remember her pointing out the stiff tail characteristic of the species, and making sure he could see the field marks. That little boy now has dreams of being a biologist, and certainly the attention Ramona paid to him was encouragement along that path.

Only last year, Ramona joined us as we took Joyce Mauck to Bass Lake in Blowing Rock in search of a male Wood Duck in breeding plumage. The other running joke - but only half-kidding, the other part serious - was the search for Ruffed Grouse for Ramona's North Carolina life list. We found the Wood Duck for Joyce, but it was in eclipse plumage. We struck out on the Ruffed Grouse. Of course, that meant we had to plan a return trip. And of course, that meant we had a great time together, whatever birds we saw or didn't see. On the return, Joyce indeed saw brilliantly colored male Wood Ducks and photographed them to her heart's content. Unfortunately, the Ruffed Grouse didn't cooperate, even though we drove through the Parkway stretch where they are most reliable and where we had indeed seen Ruffed Grouse ourselves. But we tried, and we think Ramona gave us an A for effort. Okay, maybe a B.

And then there were the Count Days when Ramona allowed us on her team. We slogged through rain in May and bitter cold in December searching for our avian friends in Miller Park, Lockland Park, Washington Park and the downtown area. Ramona took pity on us, though, and always stopped at Krispy Kreme for a mid-morning treat of doughnuts and coffee, and lunch at Mayberry's in Old Salem. But even at the stops we sat by the window and kept eyes peeled for more birds to add to our total.

On one May count it was indeed raining quite a bit, and Mayberry's wasn't open. Chester and I decided to invite the team to our home for lunch, with Ramona's blessing. I took sandwich orders and Chester prepared each meal. As we sat on the sun porch and ate, thankful for a warm, cozy respite from the rain, Ramona spotted a Gray-cheeked Thrush in our dogwood tree in the back yard. It was the first and only time we've seen that species in our yard. Several other species showed up at the feeders that we hadn't seen in the field, so it was indeed a count lunch to remember.

On this year's Christmas count we led the Miller Park team. It was an odd feeling not having Ramona there. We searched and searched for the target bird we knew would delight her, the Winter Wren. Alas, the Wren didn't cooperate. Bert Hollifield, Chester and I even returned at the end of the day, after the other team members had departed, to the bridge at the loop in Miller

Park where Chester and Bert had seen the Winter Wren in the past. Something very wren-like was indeed skulking in the thickets but it never showed itself well enough for a positive ID. Ramona, we tried! And of course, who could forget Ramona's passion for and devotion to the nesting Ravens in downtown Winston-Salem? We have run by Patterson & Fifth a few times lately, even though it is early, hoping to see signs of this year's return so we could notify her. We knew it would make her heart glad.

That was one of the neat things about Ramona. Her enthusiasm was catching. She found the extraordinary among the ordinary, and helped us see it, too. She was always ready to laugh, and had a permanent twinkle in her eye. She was a true scholar of birds, and like Chaucer's Oxford Scholar, "gladly would [s]he learn, and gladly teach."

The following passage from Tennyson's *Ulysses* describes Ramona as we have known her. Though she was in her early 70s when we first met, one would never have guessed it. Indeed, we decided birding must be the fountain of youth as she and Reggie Burt helped us over fallen logs on a birding trip to the Southport area, then sponsored a little wine-tasting in their room before dinner!

"Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are ---
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

We feel fortunate to have known this woman of heroic heart and unyielding, though gentle determination. One more quote must be added in tribute to her. It is from Stephen Spender's lovely poem, "I think continually of those:"

"I think continually of those who were truly great.
Who, from the womb, remembered the soul's history
Through corridors of light where the hours are suns
Endless and singing.

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields
See how these names are feted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life
Who wore at their hearts the fire's center.
Born of the sun they traveled a short while towards the sun,
And left the vivid air signed with their honor."

Ramona, we know you are up there somewhere. Wouldn't it be great if angels really do have wings and you can now join your beloved feathered friends in the unmatched freedom of flight?

Meanwhile, we'll keep an eye out below. Maybe on the next trip to Miller Park we will find that Winter Wren. And we will think of the kind, gentle, generous woman who would be delighted to know it is there.

With love, Ann and Chester Robertson

TO RAMONA

From you I leaned to call it 'Warbler Lane'.
Migrants and novice birders mingled there
Each spring, grateful for your hospitality.
The day you left, a mild midwinter day,
I walked the deserted lane. White-throats
Were silent, as though they knew.

So many years ago, on the bank
Of what was then Lake Katharine,
In the clear dawn of a May count,
You found me at my post alone,
A green recruit, and asked, "John,
Did you miss that swamp sparrow?"

J.A.Carter



By the time you read this newsletter, the Audubon Society of Forsyth County should have received \$760 in grant money to support adoption of the New River Corridor and Hanging Rock Important Bird Areas. We may use the money to defray chapter and member expenses related to IBA activities, such as publication of informational and educational materials, program costs, signage, or travel reimbursement. We will be going to New River State Park this Spring to monitor spring arrivals, as described in the column to the right.

You've heard about IBAs (Important Bird Areas) at chapter meetings and you've read about IBAs in the newsletter (and I *know* you've been paying attention) and now it's time for us to do some specific work. Audubon, in conjunction with BirdLife International, has identified a network of sites critical as habitats for birds. Habitat loss and fragmentation are two of the most serious threats facing populations of birds here and around the world. Audubon Society of Forsyth County has adopted the New River Corridor in Ashe and Alleghany Counties for our IBA. Our first official survey will be on Saturday, May 20 from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m. So that we don't have to leave Winston-Salem at 4:30 a.m., we plan to go to the general area of the site on Friday, May 19, spend the night (hotels, motels or camping - your choice) so that we can begin birding early on Saturday morning. There is a small amount of money available from Audubon to help offset expenses. Curtis Smalling, the Mountain Region Biologist for NC Audubon, will assist us in our surveys. This is an opportunity to gather real data that helps support policy issues regarding threatened species and habitats in our own area. And we get to spend time birding and hanging out with like-minded folks at the same time! I personally don't think it gets any better than that. I'll help arrange carpools, accommodations, survey groups, even canoeing!

If interested, contact Susan Jones at 768-9151 or at sljones@triad.rr.com

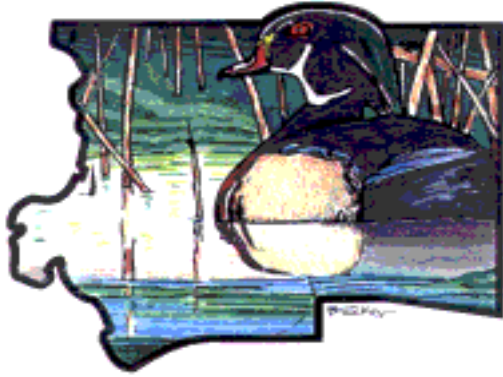
OF GENTIANAS AND BROADWINGS AUTUMNAL EQUINOX WEEKEND, SEPTEMBER 23-24

No. Gentians *do not* fly. They are small, impossibly blue wildflowers immortalized by William Cullen Bryant's poem "Ode on a Fringed Gentian." And they grow in North Carolina's mountains in the fall, specifically at the Nature Conservancy's Bluff Mountain Nature Preserve in Ashe County near West Jefferson. And, since Bluff Mountain rises to almost 5,000 feet, it is also a good vantage point for seeing migrating hawks. We have arranged for a guide to take us on a hike of the diverse ecological area distinguished by over eleven natural communities. We'll walk through a Carolina hemlock forest to a dwarf white oak forest to a broad high plateau wetland or Southern Appalachian fen. Since the 1800's naturalists have explored this ancient landscape, cataloging its many unique natural communities and species.

We'll spend the night in the area (West Jefferson, Glendale Springs, etc.) and the next morning make the short drive to the New River State Park for a fall survey of our Important Bird Area. This will be handled in much the same way as the spring IBA will be handled with various teams going to specific survey points and identifying and counting birds from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m. And again, Curtis Smalling, Audubon NC's Mountain Region Biologist, will be assisting us. And again, we'll have time to bird, play and enjoy the area after the morning's survey is completed. A small amount of money will be available to participants to help off-set expenses. If interested, contact Susan Jones at 768-9151 or sljones@triad.rr.com

Our Mission

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems—focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and North Carolina’s biological diversity



Visit us on the web at www.forsythaudubon.org

Audubon Society of
Forsyth County
P.O. Box 15111
Winston-Salem, NC 27113

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Winston-Salem, NC
Permit No. 500

The Audubon Society of Forsyth County

2004-2005 CHAPTER BOARD

President:	Bill Gifford	721-0201
Vice President:	Phil Dickinson	659-2464
Secretary:	Pat Stewart	760-4051
Treasurer:	Norwood Lide	766-7531
Membership:	Jeremy Reiskind	727-0734
Publicity:	Lois Schneider	768-6645
Newsletter:	Susan Rupp	758-4396
Newsletter Dist.:	Candi Turner	924-4952
Field Trips:	Susan Jones	768-9151
Education:		
Conservation:		
Bird Count:	Linda Davis	924-175
Hospitality:	Bill/Susan Hammond	924-1522
Website:	Andrew Pruette	774-8087

MEMBERSHIP

For membership information, please contact Jeremy Reiskind at 727-0734. If you don't wish to join the National Audubon Society, but would like to subscribe to our newsletter, send \$15.00 (make your check payable to ASFC) to: Jeremy Reiskind, 385 Park Blvd., Winston Salem, NC 27127

A GENTLE REMINDER

Roughly three dollars of the twenty dollar national membership fee goes to your local chapter. Please “think globally, act locally” and consider the possibility of contributing directly to the local Audubon chapter to support our educational efforts, the publication and distribution of this newsletter, and our informative and entertaining speakers series.



Phil Dickinson