

# THE BULLETIN

## Chapel Hill Bird Club

December, 2000

(Vol. XXIX, No. 12)

c/o Ginger Travis  
5244 Old Woods Rd.  
Hillsborough, NC 27278

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### Monthly meeting

*No meeting in December*

**Next meeting:** Monday, January 22, 2001 at 7:30 p.m. Program by Janine Perlman, licensed rehabilitator of sick and injured birds.

### Triangle-area Christmas Bird Counts

Here's the list of local counts again. It's not too late to sign up for the later ones.

#### **Sat. 12/16/00 - Raleigh**

John Gerwin - John.Gerwin@ncmail.net - 919-715-2600

Susan Campbell - ncaves@utinet.net - 910-949-3207

#### **Sun. 12/17/00 - Durham**

Mike Schultz - mschultz@duke.edu - 919-490-6761

#### **Sun. 12/24/00 - Chapel Hill**

Will Cook - cwcook@duke.edu - 919-967-5446

#### **Sat. 12/30/00 - Falls Lake**

Brian Bockhahn - birdranger@excite.com - 919-676-1027

#### **Sun. 12/31/00 - Jordan Lake**

Carol Williamson - 383-2364 - carolw@sandler-recht.com

### Saturday morning field trips

*No field trips the rest of December* during the Christmas bird count weekends. Saturday trips resume on Jan. 6, 2001. Trips leave the Glen Lennox parking lot (on the north side of Hwy. 54 just east of the 15-501 Bypass in Chapel Hill) at 7:30 a.m. sharp and return by noon. Beginners and visitors welcome! Reservations are not necessary. Call field trip coordinator Doug Shadwick for details (942-0479).

### Coastal field trip set for Jan. 13-15

The three-day Martin Luther King Birthday weekend will give CHBC members a chance to do a coastal blitz with Doug Shadwick. Last year's trip included Lake Mattamuskeet (highlight: Audubon's Warbler), Alligator River NWR (distant Rough-legged Hawk), Pea Island and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (Black-tailed Gull, Harlequin Duck and much, much more). For beginning and intermediate birders, this is a trip where you're almost sure to see life birds.

If you want to go:

-- Call Doug (942-0479).

-- If you're one of the drivers, you'll need a permit for your car to allow you to pull off the bridge-tunnel roadway and park on the islands. Write to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel District, P.O. Box 111, Cape Charles, VA 23310-0111 Phone: 757-331-2960 FAX: 757-331-4565. For more information: [www.cbbt.com](http://www.cbbt.com).

-- Be sure to take your long underwear and every other layer you own. It can be unbelievably cold from the wind chill associated with 20- to 30-knot winds in January.

### Perennial joy, here again: UNC's Barred Owls

*by Rob Gluck*

Barred Owls have routinely nested on UNC's front quad (off Franklin St., across from the Post Office) since the 1940s and perhaps earlier. In fact, according to the late UNC botanist, Dr. William Chambers Coker, the owls once used the historic Davie Poplar as their nest tree - long before its hollow center was filled with concrete. Back then the quad would have been a more forested locale, full of woodland flora and fauna. What is remarkable is that still today Barred Owls return every year to the now-noisy, well-lit, and bustling quad to breed and raise their young, much to the delight of UNC-ers, townfolk, and, of course, birdwatchers. The presence of these wild, handsome creatures and their enchanting offspring is an easily-accessible perennial joy for both the novice and seasoned nature-lover.

UNC's Mom and Pop Owl (owls mate for life, by the way) usually return to their breeding grounds from peripheral areas in Dec./Jan. each year; this year one of the pair arrived on Nov. 27. They hang out in the American Holly trees lining the quad's west side (the only trees in winter still fully leafed and providing good cover). Sleeping most of the day, they become active after dusk. Within a few weeks, courtship/bonding behavior begins at night: calling back and forth, preening each other, feeding each other, twittering, etc. Later they mate and select a nest site. For the last four years they've chosen an easily viewable nesthole about 30 feet off the ground in a large oak 10 yards south of the Caldwell monument in the center of the quad.

In late winter/early spring, the female, the larger of the two, disappears for most of a month to lay one to three eggs and diligently incubate them. While she's on the nest, hubby reliably delivers food to her, including rodents, songbirds, insects and worms. Once the babies hatch, they develop for four to five weeks in the nesthole before venturing out. They come out looking like fuzzy, white space aliens, unable to fly, hunt, or do much else except climb with already well-developed beak and talons. They are very vulnerable during these first few days and may fall out of a tree, only to climb back up as long as they are not injured in the fall. Their progress can be watched daily as they learn to fly over the course of the next two weeks and then more slowly to hunt effectively on their own. However, about once in every three to four years, for whatever reason, the adults fail to raise young. That apparently was the case in 1999.

The owls can often be located simply by listening for the harassing calls of songbirds such as mockingbirds, robins, nuthatches and others, who don't appreciate the presence of these predators in their neighborhood. Once out of the nest, the babies emit their own high-pitched squeal or wheeze, by which they too can be tracked. The owl family members slowly expand their daily travels outward from the nest tree until by August they have departed the quad entirely. They remain away until the adults return again in Dec./Jan.

These particular Barred Owls have adapted amazingly well to the quad's hustle and bustle of marching bands, boomboxes, frisbee tossers, dog walkers, screaming children and so forth. Only during the summer of the year that the movie *Patch Adams* was filmed on the quad, with bright nighttime lights and copious movie equipment, did I ever see them greatly perturbed by human activity. I never tire of watching the unfolding lives of these campus spooks nor of seeing the delighted faces of other folks who are viewing the owls for the first time. And the owl parents, like parents everywhere, never seem to tire of proudly showing off their younguns to the admiring crowds that stop to view them.

## **Adopt a loon!**

*by Karen Bearden*

Last year Joe and I had the pleasure of visiting the Loon Center in New Hampshire where we discovered an Adopt A Loon program. The Common Loon is one of our favorite birds, so we've adopted the same loon for two years. Loons face many threats to population stability. When you adopt a loon for one year you'll receive a personalized adoption package. The money raised from this program helps support the monitoring efforts of BioDiversity Research Institute, and efforts by wildlife experts on behalf of the Common Loon. Adoptions are \$35 or \$50. Call 1-888-749-LOON or check their website ([www.BRILoon.org](http://www.BRILoon.org)) for more information. Since winter is upon us in the Triangle, make a birding trip to Falls Lake and Jordan Lake for wintering Common Loons!! Happy birding!

## **Praise for the dogwood banquet**

*by Ginger Travis*

Over the years I've kept a list of the different bird species I've observed eating dogwood fruit in my yard in the fall. I do it because each year I'm freshly amazed by the richness of the dogwood tree as a food source for migrating birds and winter residents. For about two and half months, from late September into early December, that scarlet fruit is an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord for birds that need to find plenty of food fast.

Here's my yard list of dogwood fruit-eaters, in no particular order: Gray-cheeked, Swainson's, Hermit and Wood Thrushes; American Robin and Eastern Bluebird; Brown Thrasher and Gray Catbird; Pine Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler; White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco and Eastern Towhee; Northern Cardinal; Eastern Phoebe; Cedar Waxwing; Red-eyed Vireo; Scarlet Tanager and Summer Tanager (the latter seems suspect to me, but that's what I wrote down); Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Pileated and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. That's more than 20 species, and I'll bet readers can add a bunch to this list from your own yards. (A whole different subject is *how* the different species eat the fruit, but there's not room for that here. Watch and see for yourself.)

In the early 1990s there were lots of news stories about the possibility that dogwood anthracnose disease, caused by a fungus, would wipe out our whole population of trees, much as the chestnut was killed off in the 20th century. Well, fortunately it hasn't happened, and it probably won't. Dick Bir, who works for the state in plant research, says that the single greatest threat to dogwood trees is actually lawnmowers and string trimmers in the hands of careless people. He says that dogwood anthracnose does kill trees in cooler places such as the French Broad valley in western N.C., but the hotter temperatures of the piedmont and coastal plain

are inhospitable to the disease. Drought, though, is tough on dogwoods, and you can help your yard trees by watering them (without wetting the foliage) in dry times.

The beautiful red fruit is technically not a berry but a drupe, same as a peach or cherry – that's a fruit with a central hard stone and a fleshy cover. Botanically speaking, the dogwood of our Triangle woodlands and yards is *Cornus florida*, Flowering Dogwood, in the family Cornaceae, and it is found in almost every N.C. county.

A good local source of information about caring for dogwood trees is the Chatham County agricultural extension agent, Al Cooke (phone 542-8202; email [Al\\_Cooke@ncsu.edu](mailto:Al_Cooke@ncsu.edu)).

Take care of your dogwoods, and they'll take care of your birds!

## Sightings in brief

*Compiled by Will Cook*

Common Loon (3), Horned Grebe (1), Redhead (7) - 10/29/00 - Ebenezer Pt., Jordan Lake - Ricky Davis

Horned Grebe (10) - 11/8/00 - Jordan Lake - Josh Rose, Frank Rheindt

BROWN PELICAN (1) - 7/26/00 - Falls Lake office, Wake Co. - fide Brian Bockhahn. The same bird as the last couple of years returned?

GREAT CORMORANT (1 imm.) - 10/30/00 - Crosswinds Marina, Jordan Lake - Steve Schultz. The second report ever for the Triangle.

Great Egret (1) - 4/17/99 - Orange Co. - Barb Brooks

Great Egret (1) - 6/4/00 - Jordan Lake - Shelley Theye

Great Egret (1) - 6/11/00 - University Lake, Chapel Hill - Ginger Travis

Great Egret (3) - 6/12/00 - Jordan Lake - Ginger Travis

Great Egret (60, roosting) - 6/19/00 - 751 bridge, Jordan Lake - Dave Murdock

Little Blue Heron (1 ad) - 6/21/00 - Little Creek Impoundment, Durham Co. - Rob Gluck

Cattle Egret (1) - 9/19/00 - Lake Crabtree, Raleigh - Dan Kaplan

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (2) - 5/21/00 - Little Creek Impoundment, Durham Co. - Tom Driscoll, Marsha Stephens, David Curtin

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (1 ad.) - 6/4/00 - Little Creek Impoundment, Durham Co. - Shelley Theye

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (1 ad.) - 6/11-6/14/00 - Chatham Co. - Marty Girolami

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (6: 4 imm, 2 ad), White Ibis (12 imm), Great Egret (4) - 7/4/00 - Little Creek Impoundment, Durham Co. - Will Cook, Toni Rexrode

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (1 imm.) - 7/14/00 - Eno River, Orange Co. - Jim Bloor

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (2 imm), Little Blue Heron (5 imm), Great Egret (9) - 7/4/00 - Little Creek Impoundment, Durham Co. - Jim Bloor

Black-crowned Night-Heron (1 ad.) - 8/20, 9/10/00 - Jordan Lake - Dave Murdock

Glossy Ibis (1) - 5/24/00 - Greenview Pond, Raleigh - John Argentati

White Ibis (4 imm) - 6/16/00 - Brickhouse Rd., Durham Co. - Jim Bloor

WOOD STORK (1) - 6/30/00 - Flat River Waterfowl

Impoundment, Falls Lake, Durham Co. - Ed Zowadowski (fide Brian Bockhahn). First report for the Triangle.

Mute Swan (6) - 11/13/00 - Amalie Tuffin. Probably wild - not seen before or afterwards.

Northern Shoveler (3), Ring-necked Duck (8) - 10/22/00 - Wake Co. - Steve Shultz

Hooded Merganser (230), Redhead (3) - 1/22/00 - Jordan Lake - Will Cook

Northern Harrier (1 female) - 8/24/00 - Durham Co. - Edith Tatum

Virginia Rail (calling) - 6/7/00 - Greenview Pond, Raleigh - John Argentati

Least Bittern (1) - 10/1/00 - Little Cr. Impdt., Durham Co. - Amalie Tuffin

American Avocet (2) - 7/13/00 - Rollingview, Falls Lake, Durham Co. - Kate Finlayson

Baird's Sandpiper (1 juv.), Stilt Sandpiper (1) - 9/19/00 - Lake Crabtree, Raleigh - Doug Shadwick

Dunlin (1) - 11/25/00 - Jordan Lake - Harry LeGrand

Ruddy Turnstone (7) - 5/12/00 - Crosswinds Marina, Jordan Lake - Doug Shadwick

Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper - 5/21/00 - Hwy 55 Water Treatment Facility, Durham Co. - TD, MS, DC

Forster's Tern (2) - 7/14/00 - Rollingview, Falls Lake, Durham Co. - Brian Bockhahn

Common Tern (2) - 9/24/00 - Rollingview, Falls Lake, Durham Co. - Josh Rose, Frank Rheindt

Common Nighthawk (1) - 10/4/00 - Durham - Will Cook

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (1) - 10/10/99 - Orange Co. -

Ginger Travis

Rufous Hummingbird (1, female) - 4/7/99 - departure date of banded bird wintering in Hillsborough

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (1) - 9/28/00 Eno River SP, Orange Co. - Greg Dodge

Downy Woodpecker (1, near albino) - 10/14/00 - Cabe Ford Rd., Orange Co. - Pure white except for a red patch on the back of the head and some black in the secondaries, with pink bill.

Olive-sided Flycatcher (1) - 8/20/00 - Falls Lake, Wake Co. - Ricky Davis

Warbling Vireo (3) - 4/27-7/4/00 - Anilorac Farm, Orange Co. - many observers. May have nested here.

Philadelphia Vireo (1) - 8/26/00 - Durham Co. - Tom & Janet Krakauer

Philadelphia Vireo (1) - 9/24/00 - Butner Gamelands, Durham Co. - Josh Rose, Frank Rheindt

Philadelphia Vireo (1) - 9/24/00 - Rollingview, Durham Co. - Josh Rose, Frank Rheindt

Philadelphia Vireo (1) - 9/28/00 Eno River SP, Orange Co. - Greg Dodge

Yellow-throated Vireo (1) - 9/27/00 - Duke Forest, Orange Co. - Randy Emmitt

Bank Swallow (1) - 5/21/00 - NC751 bridge, Jordan Lake - GT

Sedge Wren (1) - 11/4/00 - Lake Crabtree, Raleigh - Dan Kaplan

Winter Wren (1) - 10/3/00 - Shepherd Nature Trail, Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Jason Sircely  
 Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush (1) - 5/21/00 - Haw River south of Bynum - TD, MS, DC  
 Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush (1) - 5/25/00 - Mason Farm, Orange Co. - Jeremy Hyman  
 Gray-cheeked Thrush (1), E. Wood-Pewee (3) - 10/3/00 - Shepherd Nature Trail, Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Will Cook  
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1) - 11/25/00 - Jordan Lake - Harry LeGrand  
 "Brewster's" Warbler (1) - 9/24/00 - Shepherd Nature Trail, Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Jeff Pippen  
 "Lawrence's" Warbler (1) - 9/30/00 - Lake Crabtree, Raleigh - Joe Covington  
 Orange-crowned Warbler (1) - 9/28/00 Eno River SP, Orange Co. - Greg Dodge  
 Nashville Warbler (2), Chestnut-sided Warbler (6) - 10/8/00 - Jordan Lake - Jason Sircely, Chris Moorman  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler (1) - 10/6/00 - Shepherd Nature Trail, Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Frank Rheindt  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler (1), Worm-eating Warbler (1), Ruddy Duck, Lesser Scaup, American Coot - 10/8/00 - Lake Crabtree, Raleigh - Steve Shultz  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler (1), Bay-breasted Warbler (1) - Lake Crabtree, Raleigh - Steve Shultz  
 Black-throated Blue Warbler (1) - 10/20/00 - Durham Co. - Will Cook  
 Black-throated Blue Warbler (1) - 10/21/00 - Orange Co. - GT  
 Black-throated Blue Warbler (1) - 10/26/00 - Durham - Mike Schultz  
 Black-throated Blue Warbler (1 male) - 12/2/00 - Durham - Owen McConnell. At suet feeder. The third winter-season report for the Triangle.  
 Black-throated Green Warbler (1), Bay-breasted Warbler (1) - 10/18/00 - Shepherd Nature Trail, Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Will Cook  
 Bay-breasted Warbler (plus B-t Blue and Green, N. Parula, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Magnolia, and Cape May), Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-billed Cuckoo - 10/12/00 - Lake Crabtree, Raleigh - Dan Kaplan  
 Blackburnian Warbler (1) - 10/15/00 - Falls Lake, Granville Co. - Will Cook  
 Yellow-throated Warbler (1) - 9/24/00 - Ebenezer Pt, Jordan Lake - Shelley Theye, Lee Van Malssen, Judy Murray  
 Black-and-white Warbler (1) - 7/8/00 - Mason Farm, Orange Co. - Phil Johnson  
 Prothonotary Warbler (1) - 9/7/00 - Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Will Cook  
 Northern Waterthrush (1) - 5/21/00 - Haw River south of Bynum - TD, MS, DC  
 CONNECTICUT WARBLER (1) - 9/25/00 - Shepherd Nature Trail, Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Randy Emmitt  
 CONNECTICUT WARBLER (1) - 10/19/00 - Shepherd Nature Trail, Duke Forest, Durham Co. - Bruce Young  
 PAINTED BUNTING (1 male) - 5/29/00 - Horse Creek, near Falls Lake, Wake Co. - Debbie Weigl (fide Magnus Persmark)  
 LAPLAND LONGSPUR (3) - 10/29/00 - Ebenezer Pt., Jordan Lake - Ricky Davis  
 Snow Bunting (1) - 10/29/00 - Seaforth, Jordan Lake - Ricky Davis

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (1, male) - 4/15/99 - Hillsborough - Susan Wiley  
 Pine Siskin (1) - 5/29/00 - Chatham Co. - Marsha Stephens

### Would you like to write . . .

about your latest birding trip (anywhere) or the natural history of an interesting bird species or an under-appreciated N.C. birding destination or a new book about birds? It would be great to have more articles created by members especially for the Bulletin. If you have an idea you'd like to write about, call me at 942-7746 or email [ginger\\_travis@unc.edu](mailto:ginger_travis@unc.edu). Ginger Travis, editor

### Does yours say 1/01? (Renewal time!)

If the top right corner of your Bulletin mailing label says 1/01, it's time now to renew your membership in the Chapel Hill Bird Club. Benefits to you? Lots of activities, food for the mind, fun and good people.

- You get the satisfaction and camaraderie of being part of the one Triangle organization devoted solely to wild birds – identifying them, counting them, observing them and enjoying them.
- You can go on Saturday morning field trips and bring guests anytime you like.
- You can attend monthly programs with interesting speakers.
- You receive the Chapel Hill Bird Club Bulletin.
- In the Bulletin and on *Carolinabirds*, a listserv founded by CHBC member Will Cook, you'll receive advance information about Christmas, spring and fall bird counts.
- You can access an excellent, up-to-date checklist for Triangle birds at Will's website ([www.duke.edu/~cwcook](http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook)).
- You can go on field trips to the mountains or coast, and about once a year you can join in a service project, such as trail clearing on the Johnston Mill Nature Preserve or the Hackberry-Warbler Trail along Morgan Creek.

All this for 15 bucks a year. What a deal!

So why not renew for 2 years or more? And, while you're at it, why not give a membership to a friend or family member to encourage their interest in birds? **Calendar-year (Jan-Dec.) dues for most individuals and families are \$15; for students, \$10.** If you wish to renew for more than one year, multiply the annual dues rate times the number of years.

Please send your check (payable to the Chapel Hill Bird Club) to club treasurer Fran Hommersand, 304 Spruce Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. **If you have questions, please call Fran at 967-1745.**

**Happy holidays and good birds to all!**