

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

January, 2003

(Vol. XXXII, No. 1)

c/o Ginger Travis

5244 Old Woods Rd.

Hillsborough, NC 27278

Next meeting – Monday, Jan. 27

When: 7:15 p.m., refreshments; 7:30 p.m., meeting begins.

Where: The lounge, Binkley Baptist Church, corner Willow Dr. and 15-501 Bypass next to University Mall, Chapel Hill.

Program: Basics of Bird Anatomy

Who: Norm Budnitz and Will Cook will use museum skins, skeletons and other bird bits and pieces from the Duke University collection to provide an introduction to bird anatomy. Just what are primaries, wing coverts, and lores? Why are they called SHARP-SHINNED Hawks, RED-BELLIED Woodpeckers, and Northern ROUGH-WINGED Swallows? Answers to these and other anatomical, nomenclatural, ornithological conundrums at our January meeting. Be there!

Coastal field trip, Jan. 18-20

The CHBC goes coastal every winter over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend. Doug Shadwick will lead this year's trip to Lake Mattamuskeet (Jan. 18, overnight in Fairfield); the Swan Quarter ferry to Ocracoke, the Hatteras ferry, and the southern Outer Banks (Jan. 19, overnight in Manteo); and the Pea Island and the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges (Jan. 20, and return home). The coastal field trip is nicely casual – some people go for the full three days and others join for just a day or two. Call **Doug Shadwick** if you'd like to participate: **942-0479**. You can join the group Saturday, Jan. 18 at Lake Mattamuskeet at either 7 a.m. at the refuge entrance on the causeway or at noon at refuge headquarters (old pump station).

Weekly Saturday a.m. field trips.

Except Jan. 18, the weekly Sat. a.m. field trips will continue through the spring. Call **Doug** for the destination du jour: **942-0479**. Trips leave at 7:30 a.m. sharp from Glen Lennox shopping center on the north side of Hwy. 54 just east of the Hwy. 15-501 Bypass. Trips are usually over by noon. Bring binoculars and a scope if you have one. Be prepared for a walk. Beginners and visitors are always welcome; you needn't be a CHBC member to participate.

Time (maybe) to renew your CHBC membership!

If your mailing label says 01/03 in the corner, it's time for you to renew your membership in the CHBC. Membership is \$15 per year for individuals or households; \$10 for students. To renew for several years (greatly simplifying your own and your officers' lives), multiply the desired number of years times \$15. Make your check payable to the **Chapel Hill Bird Club**. Send

it to the club treasurer, **Ruth Roberson, 38 Stoneridge Place, Durham 27705**. Please don't procrastinate. Thank you!

A half century of hawk catching in Wisconsin

by Helmut Mueller

Ed. note: Helmut Mueller, a CHBC member since 1967, taught for 29 years at UNC-CH (mostly animal behavior) and participated in research at the Mason Farm Biological Reserve.

In 1950, Dan Berger and Helmut Mueller began trapping and banding migrating hawks in an operation that became known as The Cedar Grove Ornithological Station, an effort that has continued every fall until the present. The primary reason why this has continued for 53 years is that it is fun. The luring of a hawk out of the sky and its capture is very exciting and the pleasure does not wane with time. Our excuse for indulging in this hedonism is science: we have more than 50 publications on our work. We have seen a serious decline in numbers of 5 species in the 1960s and 1970s because of DDT and other pesticides and their recovery in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, overall only one species has declined since the 1950s: the Northern Harrier, presumably because of habitat destruction and earlier mowing of hay in breeding areas. We published our results of monitoring populations in *Hawkwatching in the Americas* edited by Bildstein & Klem, Hawk Migration Association of North America, 2001. We have witnessed four periodic irruptions of Northern Goshawks occurring precisely at 10 year intervals. In 1982 we trapped 378 Goshawks! We have seen many rarities: the only records for the state of Wisconsin for the Gray Vireo and Harris's Hawk are of birds that we trapped.

In fall 2002, we arrived at the station on 12 August and departed on 21 November. We watched the skies for migrants constantly from dawn to dusk on each of these 101 days, and counted or estimated their numbers. We attempted to trap all hawks observed.

Overall, we trapped 10.5% of the hawks we saw. Excluding Ospreys, Turkey Vultures and Broad-winged Hawks, which are usually not trapped at Cedar Grove (the latter because they rarely eat on their migration to Central or South America), we trapped 19.2% of the hawks seen. In addition, we operated a 136-meter long line of 61-millimeter (stretched mesh) mist nets. After 2 October, these nets were left up 24 hours a day in an effort to capture owls. These large-mesh nets captured small birds only rarely. Birds the size of Swainson's Thrushes occasionally passed through the nets and probably only one of 100 warblers that struck the nets was captured.

We netted 1211 non-raptorial birds of 66 species, including 157 warblers of 17 species and 41 kinglets. On 22 September we netted 41 warblers of 11 species. One can only be amazed at the number of small birds that passed through our nets!

In 2002, only 528 raptors of 11 species and 50 owls of 4 species were captured and banded, our worst season since 1979. The poor migration appears to be largely a result of poor weather for concentrating migrants along the shore of Lake Michigan, although the effects of West Nile virus cannot be discounted.

Highlights of this dismal season include a Bald Eagle trapped on 27 September, two Broad-winged Hawks trapped, 15 Peregrine Falcons and 65 Merlins trapped in spite of the poor season, and a beautiful melanistic adult Red-tailed Hawk trapped on 1 November.

Unusual sightings of non-raptorial birds include a plegadis ibis on 11 September, a Greater White-fronted Goose on 3 October, a jaeger on 2 November, Bohemian Waxwings between 23 and 31 October and a Townsend's Solitaire on 8 November. We netted a Pine Warbler on 22 September, only the second to be recorded at the station.

Helmut and Nancy Mueller, Daniel Berger and John Bowers were present at the station on every day. Jack and Cathy Kaspar, Julie Gibson and Paul Radley were there for more than a few days.

The Cedar Grove is a non-profit corporation incorporated under Chapter 131 of the Wisconsin Statutes, and it relies heavily on public donations for continued operation. All personnel are unpaid volunteers.

Lots of bird counts

-- The **Chatham County fall count** results appear on pp. 3-4.

-- The **Chapel Hill Christmas bird count** compiler, Will Cook, is still waiting for late reports. Send your data! Chapel Hill results will be published in the Feb. Bulletin.

-- The **Durham Christmas bird count** summary (by Mike Schultz): "We had a great day for birding December 15th on the Durham CBC. The totals were 89 species, 10,431 individuals. Waterfowl were without a doubt the highlights of the day. We had 11 species of ducks!, topped by over 200 Ruddy Ducks, and a Red-breasted Merganser. Will Cook had an outstanding day with 72 species on his own, highlighted by our first ever Greater Black-backed Gulls, two no less. He also found our only Screech Owl (in the daylight!). . . Species impacted by West Nile Virus were not apparent in our count circle. Raptors were at normal levels, as were crows. 67 Blue Jays were less than half their 10 year average, but they are very cyclic in our area anyhow, frequently recorded in lower numbers than this. Many thanks to all my observers, especially Josh Rose, who was a great help organizing this year's count."

-- The **Jordan Lake** summary (by Norm Budnitz): "Just a few highlights from the Jordan Lake (NC) CBC, held on Dec 29, 2002. UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS: Green Heron - 1, Lesser Black-backed Gull -- 1 (New to count, but seen in Raleigh area for past several winters -- i.e., it was just a matter of time.), Great Black-backed Gull - 4, Forster's Tern - 1. LARGE NUMBERS: Double-crested Cormorant -- 2103 (previous high: 1157, so almost double), Red-shouldered Hawk -- 33 (ph: 23, so half again), Ring-billed Gull -- 12,284 (ph: 8,600, this year's estimate done by two observers, one at first light in a.m., the

other in late afternoon), Brown-headed Nuthatch -- 149 (ph: 116, so half again)."

-- The **Raleigh CBC** summary (John Connors): "Saturday, Dec. 21 was truly a beautiful day for a Christmas Bird Count! Sunny, mild, not too breezy . . . and a good number of birds and birders. Preliminary results: 93 species, though 5 groups have yet to report. Joe Miller, a reporter with the Raleigh News and Observer, spent the entire day with us, from 6 am owling at Anderson Point to nearly 4 pm while slogging for sparrows at Greenview . . . Noteworthy sightings include: Common Loon (2) and Virginia Rail at Lake Wheeler; Great Egret and Bald Eagle at wetlands adjacent to Buckeye Trail; 100s of dabbling ducks at Lake Benson (apparently feeding on submerged vegetation that grew on exposed mudflats during this summer's drought) including Northern Shovelers, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, American Widgeon...(to view these waterfowl park at the boat ramp entrance off Buffaloe Road in Garner, look toward bridge); Blue-headed Vireo at Yate's Mill Pond; Marsh Wren and White-crowned Sparrow (2) at Greenview Pond; Common Merganser (1) at Shelley Lake; Fox Sparrow and Northern Pintail along Walnut Creek; American Woodcock at Anderson Point Park and Walnut Creek; Palm Warbler (6) and American Pipit (4) at Mid-Pines; and Baltimore Oriole at Lena [Gallitano]'s feeder. Misses: Black Duck, Bobwhite, Great-horned Owl, Fish Crow, Yellowthroat, Rusty Blackbird, and winter finches. . ."

Briefly noted

compiled by Ginger Travis

-- On or about Dec. 3, **Dick Rettig** spotted a male Baltimore Oriole in his west Durham yard. It stayed till Dec. 17. Nice!

-- Poetic justice for North Carolina's hummingbird bander: On Thanksgiving Day (11/28) **Susan Campbell** finally got a winter hummer of her own. An immature female *Selasphorus* appeared in Susan's yard in Whispering Pines.

-- **Kent Fiala**, 12/7, got yard bird no. 75, Red-headed Woodpecker, at his house on Borland Rd., Orange County. A gift from the ice storm? Two immatures seen mostly at the roadside wandered over his property line and Kent was ready. A Northern Mockingbird that could have been species no. 76 came tantalizingly close, but no cigar. Kent has been in the house for a bit more than a year, so his yard list is well along.

-- **Jill Froning**, 12/13, briefly had huge flocks of juncos (about 300) and goldfinches (350 to 400) feeding frantically at her house in Chatham County. Another result of the ice storm?

-- **Josh Rose**, 12/16, on the Durham CBC: "...I found yet another great nature/food convergence: that beaver swamp behind the [Roxboro Rd., Durham] K-Mart is right around the corner from La Fondita, a little Mexican joint with a torta al pastor so good I almost stop feeling guilty about eating pork..."

-- **Derb Carter**, 12/22, observed two **Lapland Longspurs** hanging out with Killdeer in a freshly plowed field at Maple View Farm near the corner of Rocky Ridge and Dairyland Roads. The longspurs are a first for the Chapel Hill Christmas count and for Orange County, says Will Cook, count compiler.

-- **Shantanu Phukan** searched for the longspurs at Maple View Farm on Christmas Day, didn't find them, and had a glorious time anyway: "The great thing about birding on Christmas is that there is absolutely no one around and you have a sense of being in some far away, remote corner of the earth."

HAPPY NEW YEAR, PEACE, AND GOOD BIRDING!

2002 CHATHAM COUNTY FALL BIRD COUNT

Species	9/21		KB	WC	CE	KF	BP	JP	DS	AT	BY
Double-crested Cormorant	311	H		270	5	9		25		1	1
Great Blue Heron	143	H		60	6	38	4	15	3	16	1
Great Egret	282	H		230	2	35	1	6	1	7	
Green Heron	2		1				1				
Black Vulture	28			3		2		15		7	1
Turkey Vulture	68		5	15	3		2	30		10	3
Canada Goose	19				2	2			10		5
Wood Duck	44			13		12	1			17	1
American Black Duck	1			1							
Mallard	11			1		5			1		4
Blue-winged Teal	47	H		2		45					
Osprey	5						1	2		2	
Bald Eagle 3 ad., 9 imm.	12			2	4	1		3		1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2			1		1					
Red-shouldered Hawk	6	L		2	2				1	1	
Red-tailed Hawk	5		1	1		1	1			1	
American Kestrel	1									1	
Killdeer	30			2	6	3	7	9	2		1
Ring-billed Gull	3	H		2							1
Caspian Tern	1				1						
Rock Dove	30			30							
Mourning Dove	73	L	1	6	15	1	5	5	4	24	12
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	6			1				1		1	3
Eastern Screech-Owl	6	H		4	2						
Great Horned Owl	1								1		
Barred Owl	7			1	3	1			2		
Whip-poor-will	8	H			1				6	1	
Chimney Swift	53		2	14	3		4	8		5	17
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1	L								1	
Belted Kingfisher	7		1	2				1		1	2
Red-headed Woodpecker	12			1		1	4	1		4	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	85		5	24	5	6		20	3	18	4
Downy Woodpecker	64		5	18	6	2		16	3	14	
Hairy Woodpecker	13			4		4		3		2	
Northern Flicker	17			3		3		3	2	5	1
Pileated Woodpecker	14		1		2	1	2		2	4	2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	10		3	2			1	2		2	
Least Flycatcher	1	NC		1							
<i>Empidonax</i> sp.	1			1							
Eastern Phoebe	32	H	1	2	1		1		2	23	2
Great Crested Flycatcher	3							1		2	
White-eyed Vireo	12		1	2	3					6	
Yellow-throated Vireo	0	M									
Philadelphia Vireo	1							1			
Red-eyed Vireo	13		1	8				1		1	2
Blue Jay	158		7	28	17	13	7	32	5	28	21
American Crow	252		9	36	19	14	11	35	7	92	29
Fish Crow	6							1		5	
Carolina Chickadee	254		11	58	61	13	3	30	5	41	32
Tufted Titmouse	186		6	58	42	3	2	40	7	18	10
White-breasted Nuthatch	26		4	5	2			3	2	6	4
Brown-headed Nuthatch	52		1	3	21		1	5		7	14
Carolina Wren	180		10	56	30	18	2	20	7	22	15
House Wren	4			1				1	2		

2002 CHATHAM COUNTY FALL BIRD COUNT

Species	9/21		KB	WC	CE	KF	BP	JP	DS	AT	BY
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	6			1							5
Eastern Bluebird	88		3	16	15	2	1	2	3	26	20
Veery	1			1							
Swainson's Thrush	4	H		3							1
Wood Thrush	3	L		3							
American Robin	14	L		2	5					7	
Gray Catbird	9									9	
Northern Mockingbird	15			3	2		1			5	4
Brown Thrasher	18	H		4		1	1	2	2	8	
European Starling	18			2			6			10	
Tennessee Warbler	1									1	
Northern Parula	15			9	2			3			1
Yellow Warbler	2			1							1
Chestnut-sided Warbler	1			1							
Magnolia Warbler	11		1	1				1		6	2
Cape May Warbler	1							1			
Black-throated Blue Warbler	11	H		7				1			3
Black-throated Green Warbler	2		1					1			
Yellow-throated Warbler	0	M									
Pine Warbler	204		8	33	28	25		18	11	28	53
Prairie Warbler	1										1
Bay-breasted Warbler	1							1			
Black-and-white Warbler	14			6		2		3			3
American Redstart	34			24				5	3	1	1
Worm-eating Warbler	2			2							
Ovenbird	1			1							
Common Yellowthroat	37		1	13	5	2			7	9	
Hooded Warbler	1			1							
Yellow-breasted Chat	1									1	
Summer Tanager	13		1	5	1			1	1	4	
Scarlet Tanager	14		1	3						10	
Eastern Towhee	39		2	12	5			2	2	15	1
Chipping Sparrow	11		4	1	6						
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	NC								1	
Field Sparrow	5			1		3				1	
Northern Cardinal	164		22	48	18	6		9	5	38	18
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2			1						1	
Blue Grosbeak	12			4					4	4	
Indigo Bunting	48		1	20	3	7	1	4	11	1	
Common Grackle	0	M									
Brown-headed Cowbird	3									3	
Orchard Oriole	1									1	
Baltimore Oriole	1									1	
House Finch	11			7				4			
American Goldfinch	42		1	12				6	5	17	1
TOTAL SPECIES	95		32	72	37	33	25	47	33	61	42
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	3492		122	1222	354	282	71	399	132	605	305

NOTES: H = Record High, L = Record Low, M=First Miss

Weather in brief: temp 63-85F, wind W 0-5, no precip, some fog, lake level 214.0'

Start	600	745	700	600	715	645	745	600	630	645
End	1830	1115	1630	1200	1300	1050	1645	900	1830	1130

2002 CHATHAM COUNTY FALL BIRD COUNT

Species	9/21	KB	WC	CE	KF	BP	JP	DS	AT	BY
Regular Party Hours: Total	53.75	3.5	9.5	5	5.7	4	9	2.25	10	4.8
Party Hours: On Foot	48.85	3	9	4	5.7	3	8	2.25	9.5	4.4
Party Hours: By Car	4.9	0.5	0.5	1	0	1	1	0	0.5	0.4
Party Miles: Total	85	6.5	14	21	6	8	10	2	12.5	5
Party Miles: On Foot	29	1.5	8	2	6	2	5	2	2.5	0
Party Miles: By Car	56	5	6	19	0	6	5	0	10	5
Owling Hours	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.75	0.25	0
Owling Miles	3.25	0	0	3	0	0	0	0.25	0	0

Area	Party	Party Members
White Pines Preserve	KB	Karen & Joe Bearden
751 bridge area, Wildlife Obs. Site, NE Cr. Impt.	WC	Will Cook
Vista Point, Seaforth, Parker's Creek	CE	Chris Eley
New Hope Creek	KF	Kent Fiala
Harris Lake, Cape Fear River	BP	Bob & Rena Perkins
Farrington Point, Crosswinds Marina	JP	Jeff Pippen, Toni Rexrode
Morgan Creek	DS	Doug Shadwick
Big Woods Road	AT	Amalie Tuffin, Jill Froning,
Ebenezer Point, Poplar Point	BY	Bruce Young Shelley Theye

Past Counts

Year	1996	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Date	9/14	9/21	9/20	9/19	9/18	9/16	9/15	9/21
Species	86	84	99	107	115	107	103	95
Birds	1313	1584	3125	3805	4609	3887	4895	3492
Parties	5	7	10	12	13	13	17	9
Counters	5	13	14	19	27	23	37	14
Party Hours	26.5	31.3	54	70	86.7	88.3	132	53.8
Birds per Hour	49.5	50.7	57.9	54.4	53.2	44	37.1	65

Warblers

species	18	14	18	16	23	21	22	18
individuals	211	142	295	433	570	505	411	340
non-Pine individuals	94	105	108	111	293	125	187	136

Shorebirds

species	3	2	5	12	5	3	3	1
individuals	28	14	47	187	26	16	9	30
non-Killdeer individuals	4	1	23	58	4	3	4	0