

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

January 2004

(Vol. XXXIII, No. 1)

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

Next meeting: Monday, Jan. 26

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

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

Program: Will Mackin, a UNC doctoral student working with Haven Wiley, will speak on his research into communication and individual recognition among Audubon's Shearwaters. Will has done this research in the Caribbean; he'll have some nice slides – particularly appealing in January! Shearwaters are medium-sized pelagic birds that come to land only to breed and otherwise remain at sea. Audubon's Shearwaters are fairly easy to see off the North Carolina coast out toward the Gulf Stream.

Time to for you to renew? "01/04," yes!

If your mailing list bears the numbers "01/04" in the upper righthand corner, your membership renewal date has arrived. To continue as a member, please make out a check for \$15 (\$10 if you're a student) to the **Chapel Hill Bird Club** and mail it to our treasurer, **Ruth Roberson, 38 Stoneridge Place, Durham, NC 27705**. You may use the form below. You can skip the annual check writing by renewing for more than a year – just multiply the number of years times \$15.

Benefits of membership are eight meetings a year with interesting speakers; the May picnic; free weekly field trips open to all; annual weekend coastal and mountain field trips; eight issues a year of the CHBC Bulletin; the Triangle checklist compiled by Will Cook, who also maintains the club website; and many opportunities to participate in local Christmas, spring and fall bird counts – plus camaraderie with people who love birds and birding.

I want to renew my CHBC membership.

My name:

Mailing address:

Phone no./email address:

Saturday field trips resume

The free, every-Saturday field trips have resumed, with a couple of exceptions: **no Sat. trip on Jan. 17 or Feb. 14**. Participants gather at Glen Lennox shopping center and leave by 7:30 a.m. sharp. Trips are usually over by noon. Glen Lennox is on the north side of Hwy. 54 just a few yards east of the 15-501 bypass in Chapel Hill. Call field trip chair Doug Shadwick (942-0479) if you want details of the trip du jour. All are welcome.

Coastal field trip Jan. 17-19

There's still time to let Doug Shadwick know (942-0479) if you'd like to join the weekend trip to the Outer Banks and Lake Mattamuskeet over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend. This trip is about seeing wintering ducks, geese and swans by the thousands at Pea Island and Mattamuskeet, as well as catching other interesting birds up and down the barrier islands and on the mainland. A Black-headed Gull has been reported from the causeway at Mattamuskeet; if it is still present in mid-January, the field trippers will probably try for it – also a Eurasian Wigeon and several White Pelicans at Pea Island, and a Rough-legged Hawk at Alligator River NWR. And there is great potential for other goodies. In late December there were numerous reports of flocks of Common Redpolls at Manteo, Frisco, Ocracoke and the north end of Oregon Inlet! Great potential for your state list!

The coastal field trip starts Saturday and ends Monday; you may go for the whole time or join the trip for just a day or two. There is no trip fee, and all are welcome. Expenses are whatever you need for lodging, meals and gasoline. Weather is unpredictable and can be cold, particularly with wind chill, so pack accordingly.

Pelagic trip Feb. 14

Doug Shadwick is taking Brian Patteson's pelagic trip out of Hatteras on Feb. 14 – an annual tradition for Doug – and he suggests that other CHBC members sign up too. This is a great time to see species not around in other seasons. Weather in the past has been OK, but there are no guarantees of

anything in Feb. Doug says there may also be a little land birding on the Outer Banks if folks are interested, but this will not be a tightly organized trip. If you want to go, just sign up with Brian Patteson (www.patteson.com) and then make your own motel reservations quickly. Valentine's Day, for some reason, is big on the Banks and lodging is hard to find. And, of course, Hatteras lost some motel rooms to Hurricane Isabel. After making your reservations for the boat and lodging, call Doug (942-0479) to see about sharing rides down to the coast and maybe doing some land birding there too.

About your lists

Now that 2003 is over, you can finalize all your important list totals and send me any you'd like to publish in the February or March issue of the Bulletin: ABA Area, North Carolina, Durham County, Orange County, Dare County, Year 2003, Yard, Sri Lanka, Alaska – whatever. The only criterion is whether the list is meaningful to you. Send list totals to me: gtravis@email.unc.edu or Ginger Travis, 5244 Old Woods Road, Hillsborough 27278.

New Year's back on the Rio Grande

by Kent Fiala

Over the holiday break I made a weeklong return visit to the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. It's a great place to be at that time of year, plus by traveling over New Year's I get to work on two different year lists on one trip! I also hoped that some rarity might time its visit to coincide with mine but that did not come to pass. As expected I got no world lifers but did successfully locate the two ABA area lifers that I'd learned about on the Internet. A locally rare Zone-tailed Hawk was reliably hunting a fairly small field across a highway from a shopping mall in Brownsville; I only had to wait 15 minutes for its appearance. Seasonally rare Groove-billed Anis overwintered in larger than usual numbers and I found them at one known site. Otherwise I mainly visited well-known birding hotspots that I'd been to before. I'll just touch on some points that may be of interest to others planning a first or repeat visit.

Birders with fond memories of birding the trailer loop at Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park will find the park an empty shadow of its former self now that trailer camping is no longer permitted. It was traditional for years that nearly all trailer campers maintained bird feeders, so feeder birds abounded, rarities were frequent, and there were always crowds of birders with whom you could trade information on what was being seen up and down the Valley. No more. The state is maintaining a small number of feeders, but they are poorly stocked with low-grade seed, just enough to keep the interest of the standard trash birds, Plain Chachalacas, Green Jays, White-

tipped Doves, Inca Doves, and Altamira Orioles, in about that order of decreasing abundance. In the abstract it's hard to imagine that you'd ever think "just another Green Jay", but it happens.

The reason for the policy change is that the state wants to restore the park to its "natural" habitat, which apparently was quite different from what's there now. The pretentiously named World Birding Center being built just outside the park is also involved in this effort. It's not clear how eliminating the park's most popular attraction is a necessary part of the plan but we can only hope that the long term will show good results.

The former "birders' colony" at Salineño, in recent years down to just one couple, the DeWinds, is still going. Check out the ducks at the river, then walk in to their trailer, pull up a lawn chair and enjoy the hordes of birds at their feeder. Possibly the most remarkable sighting of my trip was an American Pipit perched in a tree at the river at Salineño. Several others also wanted to perch but shied off after a few passes. In the past I've cast aspersions on the identification abilities of a person who reported Pipits in a tree but I won't make that mistake again.

The El Rio RV Park at Chapeño (which is just a spot, not a town) continues to have Brown Jays daily, contrary to a less optimistic report on the RBA. When you drive into this peculiar little private park, someone will come out and hand you a bird list and mention that it's \$3 to come in and you can stay all day. Arrive at 7:30 and you can observe the first Brown Jay feeding, from inches away through a large new one-way glass window if you prefer. After a brief visit the jays generally leave but you can wander the park enjoying possible Hook-billed Kite (I missed this time but others saw), Gray Hawk, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Neotropic Cormorant, etc. You can stand by the river and hope that a Muscovy Duck might fly by. I learned a valuable tip from Cruz the owner. The land you see across the river here is not Mexico but an ABA-countable island. Most likely you won't be able to tear yourself away from this spot before 11:00 when you can observe the second Brown Jay feeding down by the river.

Reports of White-collared Seedeaters were not promising, with the San Ygnacio sanctuary said to be more reliable than the other traditional spot at Zapata, but still chancy. Since Zapata is closer I went there anyway, arriving at 1:00 PM with no guidance as to where to look. I wandered over to the "green gate" that had been a reference point three years ago (though not where I found a seedeater then) and as I approached the gate a tiny bird disappeared into the grass. Taken by surprise, I waited at the gate in hopes it would reappear. After a few minutes another tiny bird came in along the same path but paused for several long seconds giving me a

close perfect view of a female seedeater. I was too stunned by my remarkable fortune to believe my eyes at first. I had my seedeater in only minutes with no real effort! I climbed the gate and waited for some time, then climbed back out to greet an approaching birding party who had just spent an hour looking every place except where the birds were. From outside the gate we had several more good views of a female and brief views of a male until about 2:30. The feeling of good fortune was enhanced because a well-informed source had told me that only one pair remains at Zapata. One of the other birding party had seen seedeaters several times and said she always had better luck in the afternoon; possibly a tip worth remembering.

Another thing I learned on this trip is that Tropical Kingbirds have recently invaded the area. A few each of Couch's and Tropical obligingly vocalized for me. And one final highlight: When I visited Santa Ana NWR, a ranger told me where I could find a roosting Pauraque just a few feet off the trail. How often do you get to digiscope a closer-than-frame-filling Pauraque?

Empidonax near Jordan L. chaseable but can be hard to find

by Will Cook (to Carolinabirds)

I just talked to Derb Carter [Dec. 30], who relocated Jose Rose's Empid 3 times this morning between sunrise and 9:30 am. Each time it was in the weedy patch in the cow pasture. Derb noted it's a big Empid with a long bill and tail, narrow white eye-ring, that constantly wags its tail slowly downward, in a phoebe-like fashion. He thinks it's definitely not a Western or Hammond's; Gray Flycatcher seems like a leading contender in part because of the behavior.

The location again is Hank's Chapel west of Jordan Lake in Chatham Co., NC. Directions are here:

<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/tbg/hankschapel.html>

Ed. note: Josh Rose and his party found this Empidonax flycatcher on the Jordan Lake CBC. The bird was not relocated for a while, until Derb found it. It has been seen in early morning – rarely after 10 a.m. Numerous local birders have tried for the bird, but it is not a slam dunk and can require more than one attempt. Take care not to trespass on the private pasture where the bird is being seen; the landowner isn't too keen on trespassers.

CHBC members vote yes for grants

by Ginger Travis

At the Nov. 24 meeting, members were unanimous in voting to make grants to the N.C. Museum of Art for restoration work on Audubon's *Birds of America* (\$750) and to Susan Campbell for her hummingbird research (\$250). Prior to the meeting, the Beardens received nine votes by phone or email, all in favor of

the grants. The only difference of opinion was on which bird the club should "adopt" in Audubon's *Birds of America*: the Brown-headed Nuthatch or the Red-headed Woodpecker. The nuthatch was chosen in a 14 to 8 vote. You can see the Audubon print of this species at the CHBC Web page: www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc/.

After receiving her check, Susan Campbell sent the following email (the bands she refers to are metal but are incredibly thin and light):

"I do plan to get a special new paper cutter for band cutting. A cutter is the best way to get the strips (of ten) cut from the cards (of 100) that I receive from the Banding Lab. Then I have special scissors for cutting the individual bands. The old type cutter that Bob Sargent uses is no longer available and the one I did use just does not work well. I have had to file and refile to get the strips straight and the right width for some time now. But the new type that is just right for the job is a Quartet model 1530 LE and costs about \$240. You need a heavy model that will cut straight strips with a clean edge (no bend or 'burr' along it) and not curl the aluminum strip as it cuts. Will keep you posted on the excitement of the season. Still all Rufous banded so far."

Susan is having a busy banding season – see next item.

Rufous Hummingbirds in the Triangle

by Susan Campbell (to Carolinabirds, 12/6)

Another exciting day of hummingbird banding today in North Carolina. I made four stops in the central Piedmont area around Raleigh and Durham (sorry – no Chapel Hill reports at the moment) area and caught four different Rufous. Quite a whirlwind--but tons of fun!

The first location involved a recapture at Kay and John Anthony's. This my third meeting with the rather famous (now three year old) male in north Raleigh near Falls Lake. I banded him as a juvenile back in early 2001. He is the same bird that did not migrate in 2002. He did head out for parts unknown this spring--only to return to his usual feeder in October.

The second stop quickly produced a feisty juvenile male Rufous at the home of birders Karen and Joe Bearden. They live in town but not far from Shelley Lake. Karen, like Kay, is a Cornell Project Feederwatch feederwatcher and was rewarded with the appearance of this little fella during this week's monitoring.

My third stop was also at the home of a Raleigh birder, Connie Shertz. Connie, who lives in a beautiful spot right on the shore of Lake Wheeler discovered this week that a handsome adult male Rufous has taken up residence at her feeder. He was quite a sight!

My final stop resulted in an adult female at the home of backyard birdwatcher Ducky Bass. This bird seems very at home on a wonderfully wet and thickly vegetated property in Bahama (just north of Durham)

Boy, I think I will sleep well tonight... And I have a few more trips planned for this week as well so stay tuned!

Ed. note: On Nov. 23, Susan had a huge day for Rufous Hummingbirds in Ashe County: she saw seven birds in four hours. The county as of 11/23 had a total of 11 documented Rufous, including one yard with four! On Dec. 11 and 12 she banded four more Rufous Hummingbirds in Monroe, Winston-Salem and Lewisville. On and on she goes.

Beaucoups orioles – can so many be legal?

by Lena Gallitano (to Carolinabirds, 11/28)

The Baltimore Orioles have arrived in abundance this weekend – guess the foursome from last year spread the word about the treats they can find here. The first male arrived November 7, 10 days earlier than I spotted one last year. As of this morning, however, I have three adult males, one molting immature male, at least three and perhaps four other immatures.

It's quite entertaining to watch them – one adult is often accompanied with the immatures. They seem to have a flocking behavior which I had not noticed last year. They love the homemade suet (check the Wake Audubon website for the recipe in the December newsletter), they regularly drink from the large hummingbird feeder they can perch on, grape jelly also is a favorite, and the new oriole nectar feeder is becoming a routine perch for a drink of nectar. They were quite amusing to watch as they adjusted to the new feeder – large perches are built in but they would cling to the hanger and drink upside down. They seem to be getting the hang of it, however, and I'm seeing a bit more perching. With at least seven birds, they're having quite a few feeder battles – it seems there is definitely a pecking order on who gets top priority.

. . . I'm settling in to enjoy these beautiful orioles for the winter. It doesn't get much better than this – especially in a very urbanized older neighborhood in Raleigh.

New yard, new list

by Gail Lankford

After 18 years living inside the Raleigh beltline we had a yard list of 105 birds. Our best was Lincoln's Sparrow. Warblers were numerous, but we missed some expected ones and had some unexpected. Never had a Pileated WP, but once for a few seconds had a Red-headed. Had Bobwhite, Whip-poor-will, Killdeer, and Common Nighthawk. Canada Geese flew over often. We planted for the birds (and butterflies) and provided 3 pools and 3 birdbaths for

water. We fed them most of the year. It was a great yard, and we knew we would miss it when we moved.

However, we also looked forward to new birds and birding experiences in our new yard in southwest Asheville. We arrived Nov. 3 and finally got the feeders up mid-month. So far it has certainly been entertaining (as John Fussell would say). We have a large flock of Purple finches and Goldfinches, but no House finches. Both Kinglets, a Brown Creeper, and a Hermit Thrush are in residence. A flock of Turkeys that varies from 19 to 32 in number, and includes a mostly white one, appears almost daily. We have a resident Phoebe and Bluebirds. Until Nov. 5 we had a Blue-Headed Vireo. A pair of both Pileateds and Hairys are seen daily, plus all the other expected woodpeckers except Red-headed. One September when we were here cleaning the house between renters we heard a Screech-Owl. We have a resident Red-shouldered Hawk. Thirty-six species so far, and should pick up a few more this winter and many more this spring. We would love to have a rarity appear and stay to share with other birders, and who knows? Maybe we will some day.

New birding spot, Hwy. 64 near Outer Banks

by Harry LeGrand (to Carolinabirds 12/15)

Folks: Although Ricky Davis has known about this for about 8 months, I don't think he has ever posted it to Carolinabirds. NC's "top-secret" birding spot – there are now "catfish ponds" at the Tidewater Research Station at Roper, Washington County, NC; the main turn-off is at a sign from US 64, just west of Roper. Until about 9 months ago, there were extensive plowed fields and cow pastures there, on State land. Now, the public dirt road encircles a half-dozen large fish ponds (apparently on private land). Ricky and I visited the ponds on Saturday, after a trip to the Banks, and he told me he had seen up to 8 Bald Eagles here before! Sure enough, we made a full sweep of the sky -- 8 Bald Eagles! The ponds were a bit difficult to see into (from the road), as you are at eye-level with them. Did see a flock of Lesser Scaups on one, lots of gulls in the air at a distance, an adult Peregrine Falcon on the ground in a field, a Merlin (yes, a Kestrel also), and a few other things. I'm sure goodies will show up here!

So – make sure you stop by on your way to and from the Banks (of course, the same can be said for the big fields at Alligator River NWR). NOTE: The new US 64 is being constructed between current US 64 and the ponds, so there may be construction detours or delays upcoming.

And while you're Banks bound . . . get your free Live Oak in Manteo

Jeff Lewis writes that his employer, the Elizabethan Gardens at Manteo, is giving away free Live Oak trees in honor of the centennial of flight – these baby trees were started from acorns collected at the Wright brothers' memorial site over at Kitty Hawk. Live Oak is the handsome, long-lived evergreen oak of coastal thickets. So how long will the freebies last? Jeff writes (in Dec. 2003), "We have 1000, so as long as we can keep them alive it should last a good while. Please mention that we are non-profit and sell native plants (good for birds)." Jeff is an excellent birder and frequently reports terrific sightings from the Elizabethan Gardens – a goshawk almost scalped him one year, for example. So if you're going to the Outer Banks in January, when you cross the bridge from Mann's Harbor to Roanoke Island, swing up to the Elizabethan Gardens at the north end of the island and see if there are any oaks left. Although Live Oaks aren't found in our Triangle woods, they will grow here in the central piedmont. There are at least three Live Oaks on the UNC campus and Franklin St. that survived the minus-9 low temperature of Jan. 1985. So, yes, they're worth taking a chance on. (But read up on soil and drainage before you plant one in your yard.)

Origins of Snow Geese at Lake Mattamuskeet

by Will Cook (to Carolinabirds)

On Nov. 15, while waiting [at Lake Mattamuskeet] for the Barnacle Goose to show up (it didn't), we took notes of the collared geese in the flock of about 4000 Snow Geese and 10 Ross's Geese

(<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/pix/snowgeese.html>)

Six of the geese were collared as part of the White Goose Collar Observation Project sponsored by Environment Canada, the same ones that collared the Southport NC Ross's Goose of a couple of winters ago (<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/pix/sgt.html>). I visited their website, entered the numbers, and got immediate feedback for all but two, which were not yet in the database.

HLC red - Snow Goose (blue morph). Collared 1999 at Baffin Island, Nunavut, Canada.

HNL red - Snow Goose (white). Collared 1999 at Baffin Island, Nunavut

UYR green - Snow Goose (white). Collared 2002 at Southampton Island, Nunavut

HNU green - Snow Goose (blue). Collared 2001 at Akimiski Island/Cape Henrietta Maria, Ontario

E6D red - Snow Goose (blue). No info - not in database yet

E7J red - Snow Goose (blue). No info - not in database yet

The other collars (yellow) I reported at the Bird Banding Laboratory site (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/>) and a couple of days ago I received a letter in the mail for each collar reported. It turns out all were female white morph Greater Snow Geese banded near SW Bylot Island, Nunavut, Canada. Bylot Island is off the northern coast of Baffin Island in the new territory of Nunavut, formerly part of the Northwest Territories. The entire island is a conservation area, the Bylot Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary, and also now part of Sirmilik National Park.

CY81 - female banded 8/13/94. Was too young to fly when banded.

HH38 - female banded 8/12/98. Adult (born in 1997 or earlier).

HJ32 - no info received

HT53 - female banded 8/10/99. Adult.

HX28 - female banded 8/12/99. Adult.

JY44 - female banded 8/12/01. Adult.

KR12 - female banded 8/11/03. Adult.

I'm not sure whether this aids the wild-Barnacle [Goose at Mattamuskeet] speculation, but it sure is interesting to know where these geese came from!

Bye bye, "Rock Dove"

by Kent Fiala (to Carolinabirds 8/21)

The AOU has just published its annual supplement to the AOU Check-list of North American birds, the official standard for bird names and classification in North America.

This time there are no splits or lumps of species within the ABA area, although American Three-toed Woodpecker is split as a separate species from Eurasian, and Snowy Owl loses its own genus and is lumped in the same genus (*Bubo*) as Great Horned. There are a few other changes in scientific names (e.g. Screech-Owls are now in genus *Megascops* instead of *Otus*). There are also some confusing remarks about changes in the sequence of species, which are apparently going to be published only on the web site <http://www.aou.org/aou/birdlist.html> although the web site has not yet been updated with this year's supplement. I think more messing with the sequence is too bad, as too many bird lists (such as the CBC field checklist) still aren't even up to date with the last few rounds of changes in sequence. (The state lists on the CBC web site are current, however.)

But most notably, at least to me, is that the Rock Dove has been renamed Rock Pigeon! I am not making this up. It might have been simpler if they had just renamed it "Pigeon". This change is to

be in conformance with a change the British Ornithologists' Union made over 10 years ago. It is their pigeon, after all. I don't think that I have ever heard of that decision before, though.

Not (yet) a Carolina bird, but the one other change in common name is that Band-tailed Gull is renamed Belcher's Gull, a name that I think is already in use in some books.

Bald Eagles nest first time at Lake Crabtree in 2003

by Ginger Travis

In October I took a kayak over to Lake Crabtree County Park off Aviation Parkway in Wake County, got to talking with a park employee, and was told that a pair of Bald Eagles nested at the park in 2003 – first time ever! The pair fledged two youngsters, according to the employee. One of the adults later got electrocuted on a power line.

I did not see the immature eagles, but I did happen to see a white-headed adult sitting in a pine about 50 yards west of the Aviation Parkway causeway – this was on the north edge of the big marshy area. I was amazed that the eagle sat so close to the road, apparently undisturbed by noisy cars – not to mention the planes overhead. The west end of the lake is under the final approach to Raleigh-Durham Airport, and from my kayak I watched Continental, American, United, and Southwest jets come in for a landing. I paddled on the east side of the causeway in the main lake. There is a large culvert under the causeway that allows boat access to the marsh on the west side; however, a sign above the culvert said “Area closed,” so I figured the eagle’s nest might be on the west side. I guessed right.

Since I couldn’t get into the marsh by boat, I returned to my truck. Back on Aviation Parkway, I pulled off and parked on a dirt track just north of the causeway, then walked south down the road shoulder to a place in the middle of the causeway where I could see all of the shoreline. I spotted the nest in the top of a loblolly pine on the north edge of the marsh about 150 yards west of the causeway. It was very easy to see. There are two large pines growing close together in a gap in the trees; the top of one pine is filled with sticks. (This is virtually identical to an eagle’s nest I found on Mackey’s Creek near Plymouth, N.C. a few years ago – a tall, stout loblolly pine right on the streambank, with the nest filling the top like a penthouse.)

To view the Lake Crabtree nest, it is best to walk out on the causeway to a small river birch tree growing next to the guardrail. Look back to the north shore, west of the road. Do not try to drive your car out and stop on the roadside, because the shoulder is narrow and traffic is very heavy.

I later learned from info provided by Harry LeGrand that this was the only Wake Co. eagle’s nest in 2003. In contrast, Chatham Co. had six – all at Jordan Lake!

New gull book out, then withdrawn

by Harry LeGrand (to Carolinabirds 9/15)

The highly anticipated (for gullphiles) "Gulls of North America, Europe, and Asia" has just been published by Princeton U. Press. It is a heavy book (not for the backpack!), with 800 color photos, and 96 full-color plates, covering 43 species. The photos are excellent in quality, about like those in the Grant books, except in color (so you can see leg color, etc.). But, there is an errata sheet already. The range maps have a lot of problems, and I suspect that the authors (Klaus Malling Olsen and Hans Larsson) were not given the opportunity to check the legends with the maps before publication. The odd projections I don't care for either on the maps. The text is very detailed.

My main problem with the book is the single-species approach. Gulls, as with shorebirds, are sociable birds, often occurring in mixed species flocks, easy to photograph. Why, then, are almost all photos selected of just a single species in the shot? I want to see a group of gulls, with a Yellow-legged standing next to a Herring or a Lesser Black-backed, or a Little Gull or Black-headed with Bonaparte's. Photo 556 does show a winter ad. Lesser with a winter adult Yellow-legged, but many more such photos would be helpful. (Ditto for a Little Stint with a flock of N. American peep, or vice-versa, a Semi Sandpiper with a flock of European species). Also, the plates are single-species, showing all of the plumages/ages, which DOES require quite a few paintings. The book does contain a few plates of adults for size and color comparison. Also, there is relatively little information about hybrids, or photos of them. (Of course, that could be another 100 pages or 100 photos!).

The book is fairly expensive (over \$50, I believe), so unless you study gulls carefully, you might not be interested. But, for those that do, you should have the book. Just about every age/plumage of each gull species is portrayed in a plate or in photos. But -- I sure wish there would be more mixed-species photos of gulls, so that you can see size, mantle color, leg color, etc., differences more readily than on single-species photos.

*Dec. 16 addendum by Harry LeGrand: **Princeton U. Press has recalled the gull book, because of lots of errata.** I ordered mine from ABA Sales, and they refunded me the \$55 by sending them the cover page that I cut out of the book. (I got to keep the book; the cover page was proof of purchase.) So -- the reader should know that the gull book is not available at the moment.*

Mrs. Malaprop talks birds (all names sworn to be true!)

compiled by Larry Barden from numerous true-life sightings (or hearings) posted to Carolinabirds (as of 12-19-03):

Great-crested Cormorant – reported 12-13-03 at Coddle Creek Reservoir, NC.

Pileated Kingfisher

Eurasian Collard Dove – plant X bird?

Hairy Redpoll

Black-cat Chickadee – mammal X bird?

Red-cockeyed woodpecker

Common Crackle

Black-trouted Blue Warbler – fish X bird?

Ring-billed Duck – Makes much more sense than

Ring-neck Duck

Brown Trasher – These two are very close relatives.

Brown Thrasher

Pomeranian Jaeger – These three are from Hatteras “Blight”

Mannix Shearwater

Skewers

Tender Swan

Old Squawk

Louisiana Water-thrasher

Ruby-crowner Kingbird

Great Horny Owl

Ring-necked Peasant

Sharp-skinned Hawk

Scarlet Teenager

Red Iberio

Great Blue Herring – Two more fish X bird hybrids.

Purple Marlin

Double-breasted Cormorant – Close relative of #1.

Red-faced Screech-Owl

Harry Woodpecker – Cross between a bird and a local birding pundit?

Lester Yellowlegs

Red-necked Hummingbird – Gary gets several reports of these each year.

Ball-headed Eagle

Wooden Duck – Perhaps correct if it occurred during hunting season.

Surf Scooter

Warmating Wobbler

Eastern Fobe

White Breasted New Thatch

Tuffit Titmouse

Semi-palmated Sanderling

Black Culture

Snuggies – Large white waterfowl (excited Yankee dialect).

Shuggles – A broad-billed duck (ditto).

CHBC birders in brief . . .

-- In July 2003 **Jean-Anne and Bill Leuchtenburg** went to British Columbia and got three lifers: Vaux's Swift, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Blue Grouse.

-- **Pat and Ray Carpenter** noted the arrival of Dark-eyed Juncos in their north Chapel Hill yard as being as regular as clockwork – Nov. 1 as usual.

-- On Nov. 23, **Rob Gluck** reported seeing one of the UNC campus barred owls back on McCorkle Place for the first time since summer. It was in a favored American Holly tree near Battle Hall. Since that date, however, the owl pair has appeared irregularly, and Rob is not sure what they're up to. Rob also has been monitoring small Chapel Hill ponds for waterfowl. Good finds include 7 Buffleheads on the Finley Golf Course pond on 12/20 and a lone Blue-winged Teal at the Horace Williams tract pond, also on 12/20.

-- Over the Thanksgiving holiday, **Karen and Joe Bearden** saw their life King Eider up at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel.

-- **Bob Perkins** found a Palm Warbler near Rockfish Creek in Cumberland Co. on Dec. 3 – a bright spot in a very gray day. And he started 2004 with Great Horned Owl for a life bird.

-- On Dec. 13 **Ginger Travis** and **Derb Carter** each saw a Common Raven, probably the same individual, in Orange Co. just a few minutes and one mile apart. On Dec. 20 Derb saw a raven again at Maple View Farm. Orange Co. sightings seem to be increasing. Possible range expansion?

-- In mid-December **Steve Shultz** went birding at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and brought home a Ring-billed Gull injured in a collision with a car. Steve handed it over to a local wildlife rehabber located by his wife Tracy. On Dec. 27 Steve found a Nashville Warbler in a thicket in his backyard (Apex). Great yard bird! On Jan. 6, Steve (aka “Anything-for-a-lifer Shultz”) hopped a plane to Atlanta on a day trip to seek a Pacific Loon in temporary (confused?) residence in Fayette Co. Steve got his bird. He tactfully withheld the identity of a couple of equally maniacal companions on the trip.

-- On Dec. 22 **Will Cook** got some photos of an immature Red-shouldered Hawk that spent several hours perched on the roof of a van in a Duke University parking lot. You can view the pictures on Will's website: www.duke.edu/~cwcook/pix.

-- **Norm Budnitz** spotted a Pine Siskin at his Durham County thistle feeder on Dec. 24. Siskins had been reported from the mountains but none from the Triangle till this bird. We're still waiting for a big finch invasion. Bring on the Evening Grosbeaks!

The bluebird trail at Carol Woods

by Audrey Booth (918-3476; ajbooth@nc.rr.com)

The Bluebird Trail at Carol Woods was started in 1995 with 20 nesting boxes placed as strategically as possible to share our 120 acres with dense residential facilities for 400 residents. Some restrictions apply to “strategically placed” as lawn areas are interspersed with woods of pine and mixed hardwoods. We assess box

placement annually in an attempt to avoid compromising the mowers and keeping boxes away from the woods. Nesting data at Carol Woods has been compiled annually for 9 years for the North Carolina Bluebird Society and for The North American Bluebird Society.

Year	Species	Attempts	Success	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	% Success	# Boxes
2003	Bluebird	35	26	157	128	110	70	32
2002	Bluebird	50	41	227	164	162	71	24
2001	Bluebird	48	36	192	139	127	66	31
2000	Bluebird	24	22	147	142	136	92	32
1999	Bluebird	33	30	147	123	115	78	29
1998	Bluebird	34	33	132	102	98	73	36
1997	Bluebird	21	18	78	62	47	60	36
1996	Bluebird	?	19	80	66	60	75	32
*1995	Bluebird	9	8	31	?	26	84	21?

* Initial year with small number of boxes
 % = Number of chicks fledged for every 100 eggs
 Jay Rabb and Audrey Booth, September 2003

Success in Bluebird production is measured by a comparison of number of eggs laid to number of chicks fledged. At Carol Woods that has ranged from 60% in 1997 to 92% in 2000. Since the 1997 high, success has waned to 70% and vicinity, and we want to know the reason! Many variables may be contributing, including a rainy and cold March or April, less than optimal box placements, and predators. The most prevalent appears to be the predation by the House Wren. We recorded 15 events of egg or hatchling destruction in 2003, (including 1 predation by a blacksnake) in contrast to only 6 such events in 2002.

In 2002, 162 Bluebirds fledged. Ninety-one percent of total eggs hatched but only 72% of total eggs laid resulted in fledglings. Predation and unfertile eggs are largely responsible for this discrepancy. We do not aspire to influencing fertility but perhaps we may be able to reduce predation. Results in 2003 dropped to 110 Bluebirds fledged or 70% of eggs laid. Notably, only 157 eggs were laid in 2003, as 26 of 35 attempts at nesting were actually successful, the lowest success rate in attempting a nest in 4 years.

We began a more comprehensive analysis of data which included an annual look at numbers of nest attempts, nest success, eggs

hatched and fledged, percent of success (eggs to fledglings) and number of boxes available and actually used. We will be adding weekly temperature and precipitation data, which is available to us retrospectively over the nine year period, and an analysis of the productivity of each numbered box site, neither of which are called for in the state of North Carolina nor North American data.

For the past four years we have stocked meal worm feeders near nest boxes in 3 selected locations, primarily to provide opportunity for mobility challenged residents to see Bluebirds in predictable places. We have made no effort thus far to evaluate the “meal worm factor.”

The primary objective for our trail is to provide the joyful experience of a Bluebird sighting for our residents and staff. Twenty residents enjoy a more personal involvement by serving as educated monitors of assigned boxes year after year. The second objective is, of course, to increase the Bluebird population in Chapel Hill and perhaps beyond.

We presume that some of you readers are experienced in analyzing nesting data. We would welcome your help and comments as we embark on a new set of physical and statistical “improvements” for the 2004 nesting season. Call or email me anytime with suggestions.