

THE BULLETIN

Chapel Hill Bird Club

November-December

(Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 11-12)

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

Next meeting: Monday, Nov. 22

When: 7:15 p.m. refreshments; 7:30 p.m. program begins.

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

Program (rescheduled from Sept.): "History and Status of Hummingbird Research in North Carolina" by Susan Campbell, licensed hummingbird bander and research affiliate, N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences. For about 5 years, Susan has been banding the vagrant hummingbirds that show up in our state every winter. To date, 12 species have been documented here.

To learn more, go to the website of the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences:
<http://www.naturalsciences.org/nchummers/index.html>. (Many of the pictures there were taken by Susan.)

By the way, if you spot a hummingbird in November or later, call or email Susan: susan@ncaves.com or 910-949-3207. She'll try to schedule a visit to your yard to band the bird.

Saturday field trips continue

There will not be a field trip Thanksgiving weekend. Otherwise, trips leave as usual every Sat. at 7:30 a.m. from Glen Lennox shopping center on the north side of Hwy. 54 just a few yards east of the Hwy. 15-501 bypass in Chapel Hill. For details of the destination du jour, call Doug Shadwick at 942-0479. Trips end when the Christmas bird counts begin, then resume the second weekend in January. (The third weekend in January is the coastal trip, an overnigher. See below.)

Christmas bird counts

Please join one or more local counts – we need you! All are welcome, and novice counters will be teamed with more experienced counters. Note that participation does cost \$5, which goes to the national Audubon Society.

Chapel Hill

Sunday, 26 December 2004
Contact: Will Cook, cwcook@duke.edu,
(919)382-9134

Durham

Sunday, 19 December 2004
Contact: Mike Schultz, ross.gull@verizon.net,
(919)490-6761

Falls Lake

Monday, 3 January 2005
Contact: Brian Bockhahn,
Brian.Bockhahn@ncmail.net,
(919)676-1027

Jordan Lake

Sunday, 2 January 2005
Contact: Carol Williamson, cncbrdr@yahoo.com,
(919)383-2364

Kerr Lake

Tuesday, 4 January 2005
Contact: Brian Bockhahn,
Brian.Bockhahn@ncmail.net, (919)676-1027

Raleigh/Wake County

Saturday, 18 December 2004
Contact: John Connors,
John.Connors@ncmail.net, 919-755-0253 (h)

NC coastal field trip MLK holiday weekend

The long Martin Luther King holiday weekend, Jan. 15-17, is the time for this year's coastal field trip organized by Doug Shadwick. Participants usually meet Saturday at Lake Mattamuskeet, then move on to the Outer Banks. This is always a good trip – a winter waterfowl viewing extravaganza. It's free and open to all. The expenses are food, lodging and gasoline. Call Doug if you want to go: 942-0479.

Chatham fall count results

by Will Cook

The 9th Chatham County Fall Migration Count on 9/18/2004, part of the North American Migration Count, was both blessed and cursed by the weather. With the remnants of Hurricane Ivan blowing by on count day, we found a few interesting seabirds, but the steady cool rain during the best birding hours of the day suppressed the land birds as well as the counters' spirits. We ended up with 96 species for the day (5 below average) and 2278 birds (40% below average), but observer effort was also far below average, with party-hours 42% below average. The birding effort was greatly hindered by steady rain from 7:30-11:30 a.m. (with scattered rain thereafter), as well as illnesses and busy schedules. On a birds per party-hour basis, this year's 53.9 was slightly above the average 51.5, due mainly to the large flocks of small terns.

Ivan didn't bring us anything as obviously storm-related as a tubenose, but we did get a selection of probably storm-related species. Any of these apparent storm birds can occur at Jordan in the fall, but we don't usually get them all at once. Storm birds include:

(1) Shorebirds. This is our second best shorebird species count, only bettered by the 1998 count, when we had extensive mudflats.

(2) Larids. Laughing Gull (seen by 4 parties), Sabine's Gull (Will Cook), and Black Tern (3 parties) are new to the count. We had comparable *Sterna* numbers last year, but those were also probably storm-related -- last year's count was shortly after Hurricane Isabel. Unfortunately the Sabine's, a first report for Jordan Lake, didn't stick around -- I couldn't even refind it right after my 30-second look.

(3) Swallows. We had the grand slam of swallows, getting all five species expected at this time of year. Bank (Will Cook), Cliff (Steve Shultz), and Barn Swallow (3 parties) are new to the count; Bank and Cliff are record late dates for the area. Steve checked the Cliffs carefully to make sure they weren't Caves! We've only had swallows on two counts before, maximum 3 individuals, 1 species. This year's 35 individuals, 5 species is amazing in contrast.

Besides the first count records listed above, rarish species include Semipalmated Plover (Ricky Davis -- heard only), Greater Yellowlegs (RD -- h.o.), Semipalmated Sandpiper (Josh Rose and Rachel Harden), Least Flycatcher (Tom Driscoll), Philadelphia Vireo (Will Cook), Tree Swallow (WC and Ginger Travis), and N Rough-winged Swallow (Steve Shultz).

We set a few record highs, despite the low level of participation: Bald Eagle (28, average 8.5), Sanderling (6, avg 0.5), Common

Tern (80, avg 1.6), Forster's Tern (90, avg 5.6), and Philadelphia Vireo (2, avg 0.3).

We set 23 record lows, too numerous to mention separately. Lowlights include first misses for Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Magnolia Warbler, and Wood Thrush. Indeed, we completely missed all thrushes. We had only 14 warbler species this year, just 36 non-Pine individuals -- average 19 and 149. Suffice it to say, in general the land birding sucked.

I reduced the totals for 15 species (420 birds) to account for different observers counting the same birds. Full count results appear on the last three pages of the Bulletin.

Volunteer opportunity: shorebird migration surveys

(to Carolinabirds)

[Ed. note: There are 16 NC sites!]

Shorebirds need your help! Please sign up to assist the International Shorebird Survey (ISS) as it gathers information from important shorebird stop-over locations on the Atlantic coast of North America. The ISS is a program of volunteer cooperation, providing information on shorebird populations and the migration corridors they use. Counts are done by volunteer surveyors who adopt a site for repeated censuses.

Over its 29 year history, the ISS has greatly improved our understanding of shorebird migration requirements. One problem hindering the most powerful analyses of ISS counts is that some key sites are no longer being routinely covered.

The ISS is seeking cooperators to restore coverage at these sites as well as to expand and initiate surveys at new locations. Cooperators are asked to conduct counts three times a month during spring and fall migration periods. If you would like to help with the surveys, please sign up to become an ISS Cooperator.

To sign up as an ISS Cooperator, please visit our website at www.shorebirdworld.org. Click on International Shorebird Survey and then go to "ISS Guidelines and Information." Review the Site List and choose a site that you will be able to survey consistently from year to year if possible. Once you have chosen a site, please contact Brian Harrington or Robin Hunnewell at Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, which sponsors the ISS program.

Robin Hunnewell, rhunnewell@manomet.org
Brian Harrington, bharr@manomet.org
Shorebird Conservation Research Program
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
81 Stage Point Rd., P.O. Box 1770
Manomet, MA 02345
Tel. 508/224-6521

More Orange County ravens

On Oct. 30 Kent Fiala had a pair of Common Ravens calling and flying above his yard on Borland Rd. in central Orange County. (Yes, new yard bird!) Just two weeks before, on Oct. 14, Lucretia McKinney thought she heard and glimpsed a raven in Hillsborough at Ayr Mount (Poets Walk). These sightings are about the fourth and fifth in an 11-month period within a 6-mile area between Hillsborough on the north and Maple View Farm on the south. Surely there will be more this winter!

. . . and a Merlin

by Bruce Young

On my drive into work today [Oct. 15] I saw a Merlin flying over I-85 and Hillandale golf course in Durham. I got a good 10 second look at him as I sat in construction traffic and he flew over the highway and the course. I tried to make him into a Peregrine but he just wasn't that large nor was his flight powerful or direct enough. It definitely brightened a gray morning and enlivened what for me has been a poor migration season.

. . . and winter finches

Local reports of Pine Siskin (Tom Krakauer, Shelley Theye) and Purple Finch (Shelley Theye) are feeding hopes that we'll have a good year for winter finches. Last year was a bust.

AND a new editor!

Rob Gluck, a long-time CHBC member, has volunteered to take over editing the Bulletin in the new year. Rob is passionate about Ivory-billed Woodpeckers and did an excellent program for CHBC on the status of this species. But he may be best known as the guy who monitors the UNC owls – the Barred Owls that nest annually on the front quad near Franklin Street. Rob will be an excellent editor, and I am grateful to him for taking on the newsletter. If you have story ideas for the Bulletin, you can email Rob: thrush@hotmail.com. Or call 967-3134.

From a soldier's log: birding Iraq

Juan Pons posted on Carolinabirds the link to a Web log for a birder/soldier in Iraq. The birder, who signs himself "J," has been in Iraq since Feb. of this year. It is strange, and moving, to read observations of nature written so calmly and well from a place where danger is present all the time. Here is the link, and one sample entry follows. The blog is well worth checking out. <http://birdingbabylon.blogspot.com/>

“Saturday, September 25, 2004

The migrants continue to come through. My Iraq list will soon be over 100 species. On Thursday I had to

drive a few soldiers to the helipad to get them on a flight. I took 45 minutes extra to check a few spots for birds. On the far side of the base there is a small pond next to a modular water-treatment plant. The pond is about 1/2 an acre and was dug this spring. Now some reeds have grown up around it and I've started noticing some shorebirds, mostly stilts. When I checked it out there was a nice selection of shorebirds including a life bird for me. There were a dozen black-winged stilts, two spur-winged plovers, a common sandpiper and my new life bird, a great snipe. All were very cooperative and I drove my humvee right up to the bank and watched the birds from 20 feet away. At the laundry pond in addition to the usual species I saw another new species, a group of three ferruginous ducks. The males are all reddish brown with a white belly and white on their wings when they fly. I also saw some sand martins (Bank Swallows) for the first time in Iraq. Driving around the perimeter I checked the flooded areas near the fence for more shorebirds. I turned up some red-wattled plovers and my third new bird of the day a white-tailed plover. Some passerines were perched on the fence. I saw a flock of common babblers, a migrant spotted flycatcher and my final new bird of the day an isabelline wheatear.

September 23rd Birdlist 1230-1330

Little Grebe – 4, Great-crested Grebe – 1, Little Egret – 4, Mallard – 3, Northern Shoveler – 2, Marbled Teal – 4, Ferruginous Duck – 3, Moorhen – 2, Black-winged Stilt – 12, Spur-winged Plover – 3, Red-wattled Plover – 4, White-tailed Plover – 1, Great Snipe – 1, Common Sandpiper – 1, White-winged Black Tern – 10, Rock Dove – 15, Wood Pigeon – 4, Collared Dove – 6, Pied Kingfisher – 1, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater – 4, Crested Lark – 2, Bank Swallow – 10, White-cheeked Bulbul – 3, Isabelline Wheatear – 1, Spotted Flycatcher – 1, Common Babbler – 5, Hooded Crow – 3, House Sparrow – 30”

How to reach your CHBC officers:

president, Joe Bearden: Tel. 884-9050

Email: chickadeebirders@earthlink.net

vice president, RDU, Karen Bearden, Tel. 884-9050 Email: chickadeebirders@earthlink.net

vice president, CH, Judy Murray, Tel. 942-2985

secretary, Amalie Tuffin, Tel. 919-641-8072

Email: amaliet@post.harvard.edu

treasurer, Ruth Roberson, Tel. 489-4888

field trips chair, Doug Shadwick, Tel. 942-0479

refreshments chair, Karen Piplani

Email: karenpip@aol.com

CHBC webpage manager, checklist and CH

Christmas Bird Count compiler, Will Cook, Tel.

382-9134. Email: cwcook@duke.edu

newsletter editor, Rob Gluck: 967-3134

Email: thrush@hotmail.com

CHBC on the Web:

www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc

2004 CHATHAM COUNTY FALL BIRD COUNT

| Species | 9/18 | ovlp | notes | WC | TD | BP | JR | BR | DS | SS | GT | AT | AU |
|--------------------------|------|------|-------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| American Goldfinch | 31 | | L | 4 | | 9 | 13 | | | | | 3 | 2 |
| TOTAL SPECIES | 96 | 15 | | 71 | 34 | 20 | 45 | 23 | 16 | 31 | 25 | 23 | 18 |
| TOTAL INDIVIDUALS | 2278 | 420 | | 826 | 255 | 65 | 350 | 279 | 101 | 480 | 90 | 146 | 106 |

Notes: H = Record High, L = Record Low, NC = New to Count, R = Rare ovlp = estimated overlap

Weather: temp 61-71F, wind W 5-15mph, 0.5" precip (light to heavy rain in morning), overcast, lake level 216.4'

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--|--|------|
| Start | 600 | 720 | 930 | 646 | 730 | 630 | 600 | 1330 | 1630 | | | 600 |
| End | 1850 | 1600 | 1530 | 1305 | 1400 | 1515 | 1000 | 1630 | 1850 | | | 1800 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-----|---|------|---|-----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| Regular Party Hours: Total | 42.3 | 8.5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3 | 2.3 | 3 | 2.5 |
| Party Hours: On Foot | 29.75 | 8 | 2 | 4.25 | 5 | 2.5 | 3.5 | | | 3 | 1.5 |
| Party Hours: By Car | 7.25 | 0.5 | 3 | 0.75 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Party Hours: By Boat | 5.3 | | | | | | | 3 | 2.3 | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|----|----|---|------|----|---|----|---|-----|---|
| Party Miles: Total | 136.8 | 10 | 33 | 7 | 7.25 | 38 | 4 | 24 | 4 | 1.5 | 8 |
| Party Miles: On Foot | 21.75 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2.25 | 1 | 4 | | | 1.5 | 2 |
| Party Miles: By Car | 87 | 4 | 30 | 5 | 5 | 37 | | | | | 6 |
| Party Miles: By Boat | 28 | | | | | | | 24 | 4 | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------|--|--|--|--|------|-----|--|--|--|--|
| Owling Hours | 0.75 | | | | | 0.25 | 0.5 | | | | |
| Owling Miles | 1.5 | | | | | 1 | 0.5 | | | | |

| Area | Party | Party Members |
|--|-------|---------------------------------------|
| 751 bridge area, Wildlife Observation Site | WC | Will Cook |
| Vista Point, Seaforth | TD | Tom Driscoll |
| Harris Lake, Cape Fear River | BP | Bob Perkins |
| Ebenezer Point, Poplar Point, Horton Pond | JR | Josh Rose, Rachel Harden, Ricky Davis |
| Farrington Point, Crosswinds Marina | BR | Bob Rybczynski |
| Old Hope Valley Farm Rd. | DS | Doug Shadwick |
| Open water of Jordan from US64 to New Hope Cr. | SS | Steve Shultz |
| Big Beaver Creek arm of Jordan Lake by kayak | GT | Ginger Travis |
| Big Woods Road | AT | Amalie Tuffin |
| Carolina Hill Rd. | AU | Andy Upshaw |

Past Counts

| Year | 1996 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Date | 9/14 | 9/21 | 9/20 | 9/19 | 9/18 | 9/16 | 9/15 | 9/21 | 9/20 | 9/18 |
| Species | 86 | 84 | 99 | 107 | 115 | 107 | 103 | 95 | 98 | 96 |
| Birds | 1313 | 1584 | 3125 | 3805 | 4609 | 3887 | 4895 | 3471 | 3381 | 2256 |
| Parties | 5 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 17 | 9 | 13 | 10 |
| Counters | 5 | 13 | 14 | 19 | 27 | 23 | 37 | 14 | 17 | 12 |
| Party Hours | 26.5 | 31.3 | 54 | 70 | 86.7 | 88.3 | 132 | 53.8 | 67.3 | 42.3 |
| Birds per Hour | 49.5 | 50.7 | 57.9 | 54.4 | 53.2 | 44 | 37.1 | 64.6 | 50.3 | 53.3 |

Warblers

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| species | 18 | 14 | 18 | 16 | 23 | 21 | 22 | 18 | 19 | 14 |
| individuals | 211 | 142 | 295 | 433 | 570 | 505 | 411 | 340 | 208 | 120 |
| non-Pine individuals | 94 | 105 | 108 | 111 | 293 | 125 | 187 | 136 | 130 | 36 |

Shorebirds

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|-----|----|----|---|----|----|----|
| species | 3 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| individuals | 28 | 14 | 47 | 187 | 26 | 16 | 9 | 30 | 19 | 20 |
| non-Killdeer individuals | 4 | 1 | 23 | 58 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 12 |