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birding the triangle . . . and beyond, for over half a century

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Next Meeting: Monday, 23 March

When/where: 7:15 pm refreshments;
7.30 pm meeting. The lounge, Olin T
Binkley Baptist Church, corner of
Highway 15-501 Bypass and Willow
Drive, behind University Mall, Chapel
Hill.

25 March 2013: **Michael Tove**, Chair
of the state records committee.
*What is a Records Committee? And
why do we care?*

Mike Tove chaired the Utah State
Records Committee while attending
Utah State University. After he
returned to his native North Carolina,
he spearheaded (in 1987) the
formation of the North and South
Carolina Bird Records Committee
and was the senior author of the
operational bylaws of those
committees. He served for many
years on the North Carolina
Committee and in 2011 was
appointed chair of the NC Com-
mittee. His talk will explore what a
Records Committee is, how it works,
and why it's important. He will also
offer some insight into how to get
your own rare bird sighting
accepted.

Saturday Field Trips

Trips are led by **Doug Shadwick** and
depart from Glen Lennox Shopping
Center parking lot off Highway 54
promptly at 7.30 every Saturday
morning. All skills are welcome. Trips
are usually over by noon. Dress for
the weather and for walking.
Details? Call Doug at 919 942 0479.
It's useful to call Doug the night
before in case the field trip is not
local and leaves from another
location.

The Thrill of the Chase

On the first day of this month I
"chased" a rare bird. I didn't really
chase it of course; in fact birding
ethics requires that we be very
careful NOT to chase the bird away,
so that others can see it later. In fact,
this bird had been around for a few
days and I'm grateful that no-one
chased it away.

Some birders don't chase,
others do it to extremes and may
spend a lot of money doing so. This
particular chase was especially
enjoyable because it was local (in
Person County) and therefore cost
almost nothing to go after. Personally,
I find a chase great fun
even when I don't "get" the bird.

The bird in question was a Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and it is in the Charadriidae family – a plover. Its usual home is Eurasia where it is relatively common though declining, mainly due to intensive agricultural practices. It's a special bird for me. It was common where I grew up in northern England, and especially conspicuous in winter. It is a bird mainly of plowed (or *ploughed* if you prefer) fields and rough, but short, pasture, often in large flocks. It was the logo of the naturalist organization my parents belonged to and supported. It's a good logo bird – being black and white (cheaper to print) and rather dramatic with its extra big crest. Sadly, the logo has



© Audubonbirds.org
Northern Lapwing

now been changed to an equally printable black and white badger.

Lapwing is actually not black, but very dark iridescent green when the sun catches it. In Person County (where it was quite distant from the viewing spot, and not very sunny) it looked black, and was hard to see until it turned around and showed its sparkling white breast and dramatic dark collar. A flock in the air is a sight to behold as they twist and turn and

change color according to their direction. Back then we usually called it a Peewit because of its alarm call, but we knew better as in my parents' 1942 bird book (which I still have) it was officially called Lapwing. (Northern was only added when Brits acknowledged the existence of Masked, Red-wattled and Southern Lapwings.)

Although the early English poets often mentioned birds, the lapwing doesn't appear in literature until Alexander Pope (18th century) lamented their being shot for the table (along with doves and woodcock). The lapwing is not mentioned in William Turner's 1544 "A short and succinct history of the principal birds noticed by Pliny and Aristotle." Though the lapwing was probably a common bird at that time especially in the north of England where Turner lived, the book is not based on his own observations but a translation of the Greek and Roman writers (Aristotle, Pliny) who were unlikely to have been familiar with these northern birds.

Always a bird of the countryside rather than urban or suburban areas, the lapwing is declining. Collecting lapwing eggs for food is banned by the European Union (except where "culturally important"!) and efforts are underway to avoid fall crops and to keep suitable nesting land for the Northern Lapwing.

Here in the US, the Northern Lapwing is an ABA Code 4 bird, meaning that it does not breed in the US but has been seen more than 5 times here. It's definitely a bird worth chasing!

Judith Fortney

Future Meetings

April 2013: **David Smith**. President of the Chapel Hill Bird Club. *Birds (and wildlife) in Kenya*.

20 May 2013: **Norm Budnitz**, science teacher *par excellence*. *Birding islands in the Bering Sea*

There are no meetings (or Bulletins) in June, July, August and December.

Welcome New Members

Caroline Gilmore
Linda Brittain
John Wagner
Sue & Fred Schroeder

Officers of the Chapel Hill Bird Club

Elected Officers

President: David Smith

(davidjudysmith@frontier.com)

Vice President (Durham area): Judy Smith (davidjudysmith@frontier.com)

Vice President (Chapel Hill area):

Kent Fiala (kent.fiala@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Patrica Bailey

(pbailey_489@yahoo.com)

Secretary: Edith Tatum

(etatum@nc.rr.com)

Appointed Officers

Bird Count Supervisor/compiler:

Will Cook (cwcook@duke.edu)

Field Trip Chairman: Doug Shadwick

(dougshadwick@nc.rr.com)

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