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Brown-headed Nuthatch by Doug Pratt

Chapel Hill Bird Club Bulletin

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Next Meeting Monday, May 23, 2016

Time and location: 7:15 pm refreshments; 7:30 pm meeting. Olin T Binkley Baptist Church, corner of Highway 15-501 Bypass and Willow Drive, behind University Mall, Chapel Hill, NC

Members and guests are welcome to gather for dinner at the K & W Cafeteria (University Mall) at 6 pm before the meeting. Go to the back room of the cafeteria to join the group after making your dinner selection.

May 23, 2016 Program Birds of the Falkland Islands Speaker: Keith and Sharon Kennedy

For the past 10 years, Keith and Sharon have traveled together on bird photography tours. Keith is the photographer, Sharon the tag-along birder. Before retiring to Raleigh in 2014, they lived for 30 years in Wisconsin where Keith worked as an entomologist and Sharon had a yard list that was the envy of her birder friends--128 species including 28 of the Eastern wood-warblers. (That eBird yard list is what sold their house in Racine!) They met in grad school at Cornell University.



Black-browed Albatross
Photo credits: Keith Kennedy



South American Snipe

The Falkland Islands, an archipelago located in the Southern Ocean approximately 270 miles east of the southern tip of South America, are one of the last untouched wildlife wonders of the world. For birders and photographers alike, a visit to the Falklands provides the ultimate in up-close animal encounters.

The Falklands are home to over one million penguins--5 different species including Gentoo, King, Macaroni, Magellanic, and

May 23 program continued

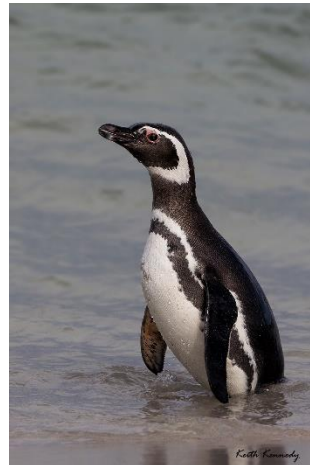
Southern Rockhopper. Two-thirds of the world's Black-browed Albatrosses occur in the Falklands along with about 40% of the world's Southern Giant Petrels. Two endemics occur there, Cobb's Wren and the flightless Falkland Steamer Duck. Uncommon in other parts of their range, Striated Caracaras are common in the Falklands. Canada breeders, White-rumped Sandpipers winter on the islands' wind-swept beaches.

There are also colonies of elephant seals, South American sea lions plus orcas that show the unusual behavior of entering narrow tidal lagoons to hunt seal pups.

Charles Darwin, during his Falklands visit in 1833, noted that the wildlife was abundant and exceedingly tame, yet he found the landscape somewhat drab and depressing. Keith (photographer) and Sharon Kennedy (birder) will explain why, contrary to Darwin, a visit to the Falklands is such an exciting and enriching experience for naturalists. In addition, they will discuss logistics of getting there and why the Falklands today are more British than many places in the UK.



King Penguin



Magellanic Penguin



Rockhopper Penguin

King Penguins



Photographing Hummingbirds

by Barbara Driscoll

Hummingbirds are clever, interesting and beautiful birds, but they can be challenging to photograph primarily because their wings beat as fast as 200 times per second. Some people prefer photos of hummingbirds with their wings still and others prefer some motion in the wings. This article is not about a complicated flash set up which stops the motion of a hummingbird's wings; for that, you will need to look up one of the many articles about that on the internet. This article focuses on providing tips to help the average photographer take better hummingbird pictures.

First, focus on planting flowers which are attractive to hummingbirds in your yard, such as cardinal flowers, coral honeysuckle, trumpet vines, cross vines or one of the many types of salvia. I found that putting cardinal flowers in containers on my patio was very effective. Hummingbirds really like this plant and will feed on it in the container wherever you place it, which can be a few feet from where you sit to photograph them. Also think about what is behind the hummingbird, your background. You don't want it to be cluttered or full of distracting objects.

Another option is to remove all but one of your hummingbird feeders. Once they are going to only that one, you can replace it with a flower. Squirt some nectar into the flower for the birds. Hummingbirds typically approach a flower to feed and hover several inches from the plant. Watch where they typically hover and set your focus on that spot. I use a 100-400 zoom lens, and you will probably want to use the longest lens or zoom function that you have.



Photo credit: Barbara Driscoll

It is important to have a very fast shutter speed if you want to freeze the wings which means you need to shoot faster than 1/2500. You can set your camera on manual in order to control the shutter speed and depth of field. Practice with a fairly narrow depth of field (5.6 or 6.3), so that the background is blurry. Focus on the eye of the bird, as the face and eye need to be in sharp focus. If your camera does not have a manual setting then use the fastest setting possible.

I have also gotten very good pictures of hummingbirds perched on a plant. Set up a place for them to perch close to the flowers. Often they will return to the same place, and pictures of them perched can be just as good as in flight. It is certainly easier to get the whole bird in focus if they are perched.

Editors Note: A photograph by Barbara of a Green Violetear received the Fine Art Winner photography award by National Audubon. See the May–June 2016 issue of Audubon Magazine.

The Joy of the Count – Photos from the 2016 Spring Bird Count



Eastern Kingbird



Great Blue Heron

Jordan Lake Count near Deep River, May 1, 2016

Photo credits: Norm Budnitz



Eastern Kingbird



Wild Turkeys

Photo credit: Todd and Elizabeth Bishop



Julie Angerman (blue hat) and Marty McClelland (yellow boat) up in the Morgan Creek swamp -- flooded from recent rain: 4.25 feet above normal! It was a good count for warblers, not so good for rails. We heard only one rail calling. Sure is fun to float over beaver dams and paddle at will through a swamp. Seven hours and seven miles by kayak within the count circle. Photo credit: Ginger Travis

Spring bird count continued



Counters Julie Angerman (blue hat) and Marty McClelland next to soon-to-be removed Solar Bee, Jordan Lake. Photo credit: Ginger Travis



Hooded Warbler



Magnolia Warbler



Eastern Box Turtle

These are a few shots I took while participating in the 2016 Chapel Hill Bird Count on Saturday 5-7-2016. My count area was Carolina Meadows. I covered the residual areas and game lands between the campus and Morgan Creek. For what it's worth I'll mention, that I think the most interesting capture I got was some video of a Louisiana Waterthrush performing a broken wing display when I apparently got close to a nest.

Photo credits: Dave Murdock



Five-lined Skink

Spring bird count continued



These are all from the New Hope Audubon Jordan Lake spring bird count. Margaret Vimmerstedt at abandoned road Parkers Creek. Great Blue Heron at Parkers Creek. Box Turtle crossing closed road a Popular Point. Photo credit: Loren Hintz



Orchard Oriole
Arthur Minnis Road



Bank Swallow
Mapleview Farm



Bobolink
Mapleview Farm



Prothonotary Warbler
University Lake



Contemplative Eastern Phoebes
University Lake



Louisiana Waterthrush
University Lake

Photo credits: Jan Hansen

Spring bird count continued



For the Chapel Hill spring bird count, Maria de Bruyn counted birds in her yard and she was delighted to see birds that had been banded there in 2015 and 2016. Corey catbird and Clancy cardinal were returnees from last year.

Another pleasant surprise was the trio of rose-breasted grosbeaks. A pair of blue grosbeaks had already continued their journey but the rose-breasted group was still enjoying the seed. Among the birds joining them at the feeders were a gorgeous blue jay and a brown-headed cowbird, the latter bird considered a nemesis by many but a handsome fellow nonetheless.



Photo credit for the collages: Maria de Bruyn

Spring bird count continued



Pond near Carolina North in the early morning



Killdeer behind a building off Municipal Drive



Eastern Phoebe near Bolin Creek

Bird count area 6 – Bolin Creek area

Photo credits and a comment from Jim Capel... "Sometimes it's hard to count and take pictures when there are a lot of birds singing and posturing. But the Phoebe and I shared a moment when it was quiet."

Another year?

a message from our President David Smith

What does a year of birding look like for you? Do you go on birding trips to far-off parts of the world, as Judy and I (and others in the club) do? Do you check out your favorite local spot once a week or more, to follow the seasonal changes in bird behavior and abundance? Do you join the field trips run by the Chapel Hill Bird Club (or New Hope Audubon)? Do you participate in data collection activities such as Christmas and Spring Bird Counts, Great Backyard Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, or eBird data entry? There are so many different ways to enjoy the avocation that we share.

What did a year for the Chapel Hill Bird Club look like? In our programs this year, we traveled to Peru, to New Zealand, and (in the final meeting of the year) to the Falklands; we studied the sex lives of blackbirds; we tracked the return of the Bald Eagles to Greensboro; we learned about North Carolina's hummingbirds; and we visited Pine Island Sanctuary on the Outer Banks. We joined Bob for his weekly Saturday morning field trips. We kept in touch with each other, not only at our monthly meetings but also through our active Facebook group.

What will another year look like? We know that the birds of central North Carolina will sing, nest, migrate in and out, and sometimes frustrate our attempts to see them. We can be sure that the Club will have good programs and good field trips. And of course our fellow birders will enrich our shared time together. Enjoy the birds! And don't forget to put the meetings and trips of the Chapel Hill Bird Club on your calendar.



A note from the editor...thank you CHBC members for the ideas, articles and photos you have shared over the past several months for our monthly Bulletin. You've made my new job as editor easy and enjoyable. I look forward to your contributions when we resume our Bulletin in August. Mary George

Officers of the Chapel Hill Bird Club

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