

The Piedmont Birder

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Field Trip Report: North Carolina Zoo

by Amy Hanson

On Saturday, November 20, twenty-four members of the T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society and the Piedmont Bird Club were lucky enough to spend a long morning at the North Carolina Zoo with General Curator (and former Bird Curator) Ken Reininger.

Ken met us at 9:15 and we were immediately directed to board two zebra-striped buses to the R.J. Reynolds Forest Aviary. Our first stop was just outside the aviary in front of the Chilean Flamingo exhibit.



Chilean Flamingo by [Alina Zienowicz](#)
via Wikimedia Commons

There we watched six gorgeous, long-legged pink individuals walk about while we learned several interesting facts from Ken about flamingo biology and captive management. It turns out that the extremely bright pink color the animals have in breeding season is not only from the carotenoids in their diet; they also get some enhanced color from pigment in their preening gland. Preening increases prior to and during breeding season, then tapers off when breeding season is over. We also learned that wild flamingos

have a “high divorce rate” – they like to change mates every year. What that means for captive management is that they need to be kept in large flocks if they are to reproduce. Finally, we found out that flamingos in North Carolina get very dry feet in the winter. To combat this, they get a foot bath full of corn oil to wade through when going from their outdoor exhibit into their enclosure. Sounds like quite a spa.

Next, we entered the aviary, a lush, heavily planted geodesic dome that makes you think you have travelled to the rainforest of South America or Asia. We got there just in time to see the bird keepers setting out breakfast. Because of this good timing, and the detailed knowledge of Ken and bird keeper Erin Walchli, we got to see amazingly colorful and intriguing



Female Eclectus Parrot by [Kiril Kolev](#)
(originally posted to Flickr as Sipping Water)
via Wikimedia Commons

birds with exotic names such as the Eclectus Parrot, Green Woodhoopoe, Blue Dacnis, Bali Mynah, Victoria Crowned Pigeon (the largest pigeon in the world), and Red-faced Liocichla. We even saw the

Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot, although none were hanging upside down. I’ve seen it before; it’s hilarious.

We then took a short walk to the Sonora Desert, another geodesic dome, but this one is warm and dry. In it are some of our native western species such as the Gila Woodpecker, Roadrunner, Horned Lark, Gambel’s Quail, and Abert’s Towhee. The NC Zoo works with wildlife rehabilitation centers in Arizona to obtain birds for this exhibit. It’s a win-win situation. Injured birds that are not suitable for release back into the wild get a great home in the Sonora Desert Exhibit and the zoo gets great exhibit animals.



Gambel's Quail By [John Mosesso, Jr](#)
National Biological Information
Infrastructure, via Wikimedia Commons

Our last official stop was at the Rocky Coast exhibit, home to three species of birds whose first-ever captive breeding was recorded at the North Carolina Zoo. As we learned at Ken’s talk at the Piedmont Bird Club Meeting on November 18, the NC Zoo is known amongst zoological institutions for successful captive management and breeding of many avian species, passerines and sea birds in particular. This is in large part due to the extent to which they go to provide an environment for

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North Carolina Zoo Field Trip Report, *continued*

the birds that resembles their wild habitat as much as possible. The Rocky Coast exhibit is a perfect example. The exhibit is composed of a rock wall with nesting cavities and a pool of water, all of which are kept at 50 degrees F. This resembles their home environment at 54 degrees north latitude. The daylight/darkness cycle of the exhibit also mimics their native habitat. Every 10 days, the zookeepers adjust the timers in the exhibit according to a posted schedule that correlates to what



Horned Puffin by US Fish & Wildlife Service via Wikimedia Commons

the birds' wild counterparts are experiencing. As a result, Thick-billed Murres, Horned Puffins, and Parakeet Auklets have all successfully bred in this unique exhibit. As a very special treat, our group was able to go behind the scenes where keepers

Sarah McCrory and Melissa Vindigni filled us in on the details of maintaining sea-birds. They opened up the keeper-entry doors to the exhibit and let us peek our heads into the cool sea environment. We also got a peek at the freezer full of fish that are fed to the birds and saw the rock climbing and scuba diving equipment the keepers use to keep the exhibit clean.

Overall it was a fantastic day full of sun, friendship, and of course, wonderful birds. Although the group did not scout for native wild birds officially, many field trip participants stayed on to tour more of the zoo on their own and may have encountered a few. Ken mentioned that two particularly good birding areas in the spring are the wetlands near the picnic tables accessible from the North America parking lot, as well as the streamside area of the Cypress Swamp exhibit when you first enter the zoo grounds. So if you haven't been to the zoo lately, take a trip and see some of the 90 species and over 400 individual birds housed there, as well as other wildlife, native and exotic. While you're there enjoying yourself, you will be supporting wildlife conservation around the world.

News of Members: Hal Strickland

— adapted from an article in the Greensboro News & Record



Longtime PBC member Hal Hazelton Strickland Jr., 97, of Greensboro and Meadows of Dan, VA, died Saturday, December 11, 2010, after a brief illness. He was a chemical engineer and a retired executive with Burlington Industries, and an avid birder.

Hal was born in Birmingham, AL, attended public schools there, and became an Eagle Scout. He worked his way through Georgia Tech as a co-op student, earning a degree in chemical engineering in 1936. During World War II he worked on a project for DuPont in Niagara Falls, NY, to develop a wakeless torpedo for the Navy. After the war he joined Burlington Industries and eventually was in charge of purchasing all manmade fibers for the company's manufacturing operations. He was retired for 32 years.

Hal was a man of many talents. He was a skilled woodworker, making furniture for his and Fran's homes and for their

children, and earned a surveyor's license in the 1970s so he could survey his property. He was an accomplished painter, a dedicated gardener, and, as a child of the Great Depression, a determined tinkerer. He built his own hi-fi stereo system, built the family's first color TV from a kit, and at one point constructed and nearly perfected a windmill designed to draw water from a natural spring and pipe it to his mountain home. When he decided he needed a scroll saw, he purchased two old foot-treadle sewing machines and adapted the machinery for the upper and lower jaws of the saw.

In 1967 Hal designed an A-frame home in Patrick County, VA, near the headwaters of the Smith River, and he and his wife Fran and their children helped complete the home. There they tended fruit and vegetable gardens and watched the sunrise and the birds from their deck perched on the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge mountains. Hal was an avid birdwatcher, having sighted more than 1,000 species of birds, many of them during his extensive travels in retirement, including a trip to Antarctica two years ago to observe penguins. He taught his children and grandchildren about the birds that visited their place in the hills and invited the Piedmont Bird Club to visit for field trips.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS, TO THE PIEDMONT BIRD CLUB!

Barbara Dua & Bill Dobson
Donna Garcia
Gayle Nadel & Michael Beachler

Sharing the Good Stuff

This section contains links to interesting/fun sites that PBC members would like to share with the rest of the Club.

[Bear at the Birdfeeder](#)

[Melanistic Fawn](#) We often hear about albino wildlife, but here's a look at its opposite, a black fawn.

[Yosemite's Frazil Ice](#) A look at a fascinating and beautiful phenomenon in the frozen streams of Yosemite

[Audubon Book Sells for \\$10.3 million](#)

[Backyard Bird Feeding](#) Audio from NPR with birdfeeding tips for the urban yard

[How Crossbills Feed](#) Interesting insights, including slow-motion video, explaining the why and how of those strange crossed bills.

[Bird Rescue Roof Collapse](#) In case you missed it, news coverage of the problems caused by snow at a waterfowl rescue center.

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JANUARY PROGRAM

Families welcome
Free admission

“Natural and Human History of the Guilford College Woods”

Thursday, January 13, 2011

7:00 p.m. – Program in the community room, Kathleen Clay Edwards Family Branch Library, 1420 Price Park Road

Check our website for upcoming field trips
www.tgpearsonaudubon.org

January Calendar

Saturday, January 8

Field Trip - White Street Landfill

Special arrangements are made for our birding group to enter this facility where several species of sparrows, raptors, both species of vulture, and other interesting birds have been spotted in past winters. Meet in the parking lot of the [Congregational United Church of Christ](#) at 8:30 a.m. to carpool. This is important so that our birding group's cars will not interfere with trucks that are regular at the landfill. We also have an opportunity to consolidate further at the parking area of the landfill office. This a joint trip with TGPAS.

Leader: Carolyn Allen; 288-3045, texallennnc@aol.com

Saturday-Monday, January 15-17

Field Trip - Highland County Virginia

The Bluegrass Valley in Highland County, VA, is sometimes referred to as Little Switzerland of Virginia. It is scenic and wild indeed. The birds that winter in this mountainous area will be our targets: Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Black-capped Chickadee, Horned Lark, and a variety of winter finches. (In past years these have included Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, etc.) With good luck we may even stumble across a Red Crossbill or a Tree Sparrow! Birding will be done at feeders and along roadsides. We will carpool (three cars) during the birding forays along the country roads. Maximum of eight participants plus leader(s). Preference given to those who did not go last year. Saturday departure time and place to be determined. Leader: George Wheaton; 336-540-8953(h), 336-392-3652(c), gcwheaton@earthlink.net

Thursday, January 20, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting/Program: “Canada Goose Populations in Greensboro and their Impact on Human Health and Safety”

Liz Rutledge, Ph.D. student in Fisheries, Wildlife Sciences, and Conservation Biology at NCSU, will discuss recent studies of the local goose population and how the information gathered can be used to reduce human-goose conflicts.

Saturday, January 22

Field Trip - Greensboro Lakes

Meet at 9 a.m. Contact leader for location. Ducks, geese, grebes, mergansers, and gulls are our target birds on this tour of lake overlooks. Dress warmly and bring a thermos of something hot; the wind off the lake can be chilling. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. No walking. This is a joint trip with TGPAS. Leaders: Henry and Elizabeth Link; 273-4672, linkh@bellsouth.net