

The Piedmont Birder



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Audubon Christmas Bird Count: Longest-running Citizen Science Survey in the World

by Elizabeth Link



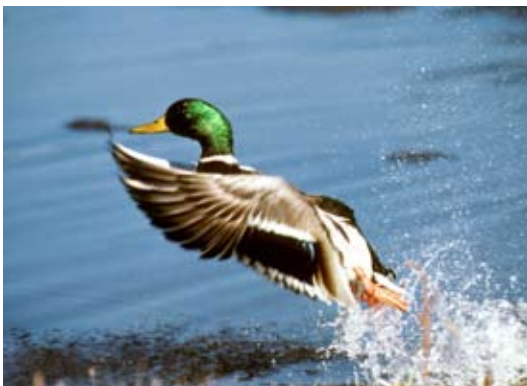
This December marks the 111th anniversary of the first Christmas Bird Count, and on Saturday, December 18, 25 to 30 birders from the Piedmont Bird Club will head out into the 10 territories of the Greensboro count circle to count every bird that they can find during the 24-hour period. While this is a large and enthusiastic group, it averages out to 2 to 3 people per territory, so we're always looking for volunteers to help out.



The first Christmas Bird Count was organized by a group of people who were concerned that hunting was causing unsustainable declines in some bird populations. It was traditional to hold a "side hunt" on Christmas Day, in which teams of hunters competed to see which side could shoot the most birds, so these concerned citizens decided to count birds rather than shoot them. The effort quickly grew from a handful of local counts on that first Christmas, to a widespread effort that now includes over 2000 count areas and almost 60,000 individuals in the U.S., along with counts in South and Central America and even Antarctica.



The first count in Greensboro was conducted on December 24, 1944, by one individual (no record on the Christmas Count web site of who the person was) who located 82 species – among them 64 Bobwhite, 2 Barn Owls, 2 Loggerhead Shrikes, and no House Finches.



Each [Audubon Christmas Bird Count](#) is conducted within a "count circle", a circle 15 miles in diameter that is fixed in the same location year to year. The center of the Greensboro count circle was established as the WBIG radio tower on Battleground Avenue, now the location of a Lowe's home improvement store, and has remained the same since that

first count. Only birds that are within the count circle can be included in the count.

The Count Day is 24 hours, from midnight to midnight, and must take place between December 14 and January 5. The Greensboro count is usually on the last Saturday before Christmas. In addition to birds recorded on the Count Day, there are Count Week birds that can be recorded. These are birds that are seen between the Wednesday before the count and the Tuesday after the count – but only if that species was not recorded on Count Day.

The data gathered during the Christmas Counts around the country are useful because of the long period of time over which it has been gathered. Bird count data have been used to document fluctuations in bird populations and the increase or shrinkage of geographic ranges, and have been the basis for initiating conservation efforts for bird species found to be in serious decline.

We can always use volunteers for the Christmas Count. If you would like to go out and help cover a territory, you will be paired with birders who have previous experience in doing the Christmas Count. For those who'd like to participate but aren't up for getting out in the field, watching the feeder in your backyard is a good way to contribute to the count. You will need to register in advance with the Count Coordinator, Elizabeth Link, to participate.

For more information about participation in the Christmas Count, please contact Elizabeth at elzlink@yahoo.com.

Field Trip Report : Sparrow Hunt - October 25

- by George Wheaton

On Monday, October 25, six PBC birders hunted, hunted, and hunted (!) for a variety of sparrows in northeastern Guilford County. Due to lowering skies, the threat of severe thunderstorms, and sprinkles, our efforts were only partially rewarded. We tallied only six species of sparrow (see species list) and had only the briefest of looks at them.

However, the group did come up with one really good bird - a Merlin, identified by Carolyn Allen and confirmed by the rest of the group. This is the fifth record for Guilford County since 1994, but the fourth report in the past four years!

Also of note was one enormous mixed flock (i.e., 500 -1,000) of blackbirds. In spite of careful searching we were unable to find any but the usual suspects.



Merlin, *Falco columbaris* - Photo by [Raj Boora](#)

Species List -34

Canada Goose
Mallard
Great Blue Heron - flyover on Strader Rd.
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Cooper's Hawk
Merlin - !!! Nutt Road
Killdeer - Nutt Road
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Blue Jay
American Crow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Carolina Wren
Eastern Bluebird - many along Strader Rd.
American Robin
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling - a couple in mixed flock
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow - Nutt Road
Savannah Sparrow - Nutt Road
Song Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow - an adult & a 1st-winter below the Nutt Road pond
Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird - one picked out of mixed flock
Common Grackle - many in mixed flock
Brown-headed Cowbird - hundreds in mixed flock
American Goldfinch

Field Trip Report : Bog Garden - November 13

- by Louise Brown



White-throated Sparrow
Photo by [Cephas](#)

It was a beautiful fall day for our field trip. Our group welcomed some veteran members as well as a few brand new ones. As we wandered along the boardwalk a substantial flock of American Robins livened the tree tops and White-throated

Sparrows lisped in the underbrush, actively feeding on berries. The creek that feeds the lake was full of Mallards eagerly soliciting handouts. (Alas, we had no crumbs to offer!)

A smattering of winter ducks populated the lake: a handful of Ring-necked Ducks, two female Northern Shovelers,

and a Pied-billed Grebe. In the woods on the hill above the lake we watched a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers flitting from tree to tree, staking out their seasonal claims. A narrow path leads back from those woods above the lake, where we had a better vantage point to see birds not visible from the boardwalk. There was a Great Blue Heron, posing majestically for us on a dead branch in the middle of the water.

We also paused to admire many of the botanical offerings of the Bog Garden, the magnificent beeches, the larger ones invariably carved with the initials of young sweethearts, some of the smaller ones yet unscathed. On the top of the hill above the lake, we marveled at the muscled trunks of several specimens of ironwood tree.

Down on the boardwalk, on the back side, are some lovely tall sycamore trees

and the understory was proliferate with paw paws, a host plant for the Zebra Swallowtail. Northern Flickers called sharply from the upper stories, with their resounding "yarp."

Mammals included a number of squirrels, one chipmunk, a gray cat, and numerous dogs (being walked by their people.)

Below is a list of the birds we saw (and/or heard).

Pied-billed Grebe	Carolina Chickadee
Great Blue Heron	White-breasted Nuthatch
Canada Goose	Brown-headed Nuthatch
Mallard	Carolina Wren
Northern Shoveler	American Robin
Ring-necked Duck	Northern Mockingbird
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Northern Cardinal
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Eastern Towhee
Downy Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Northern Flicker	White-throated Sparrow
Blue Jay	American Goldfinch
American Crow	



JULIEN McCARTHY - Congratulations to our Membership Chairman! Julien's beautiful woodturning won the third place prize in the Amateur Three-dimensional Fine Arts category at the North Carolina State Fair. Julien became interested in wood while just a kid at summer camp and loves how turning brings out the beauty of wood. Incorporating nutshells into his art (how in the world does he do that?!) was inspired by basket weavers.

RANDALL GRACE, a stylist at Toppa the Morn hair salon on New Garden Road, showcases the color and beauty of the commonplace in her watercolor paintings, which are currently on display at [Port City Java](#), 2920-F Martinsville Road, Greensboro – right next to Wild Birds Unlimited.

Randall began painting during her time on St. Croix, under the tutelage of Toni Lance, renowned (at least on St. Croix) watercolorist and bird rehabber. She has been a student of Alexis Lavine while in Greensboro.

Stop by for a hot drink and a look at her work, because these photos don't begin to do it justice. The pictures will be there for the next 2 months.



MARGOT ROBINSON, by profession a corporate trainer with an M.A. in Management and Supervision, is a self-taught painter of faces – (not to be confused with face-painting). As a teen, Margot used to draw eyes because she felt that they were the windows of the soul. As an adult, she has added faces to go with the eyes. Her brightly-colored fanciful countenances, which will bring a smile to *your* face, are also on display at Port City Java.



News of Members: Janet Eley

PBC wishes for a speedy and uneventful recovery for Janet Eley, who underwent extensive back surgery on November 1.

Country Park Cleanup Crew



Best Trash of the Day, found by Paul & Janet Morien



Jean Murdick, Janet & Paul Morien, Cal Weimer



Don Allemann



Cal Weimer, Margaret & John Barlow

Christmas Bird Count

needs volunteer birders, no experience necessary: Contact count coordinator Elizabeth Link, 273-4672, elzlink@yahoo.com, if you can help. (See article page 1.)

Field Trip Committee

needs leaders for the following field trips:

- 3/19/11 Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Park near Scotland Neck, NC
- 4/22/11 - 4/24/11 Easter Trip to Huntington Beach State Park and surrounding area.

Contact Ron Morris for complete information: 294-7631, rmorris1125@hotmail.com

December Calendar

Saturday, December 4

Field Trip - Alamance County

This trip will take place at two sites in Alamance County: Lake Macintosh, Burlington's main reservoir for drinking water, and Cedarrock Park, which combines trails through typical Piedmont forests and fields with an historical working farm representing rural life in the 19th Century. In the past, 52 species in these two areas were observed by noon. Leader: Lynn Moseley, 226-4353, lmoseley@guilford.edu

Tuesday, December 7

PBC Holiday Dinner 6:00-9:00 p.m.



PBC members and their guests will enjoy a catered meal in the Haywood Duke Room of [Holy Trinity Episcopal Church](#), 607 North Greene Street, Greensboro. Reservation deadline: 11/29/10. Questions about the dinner: contact Helen DeCasper, 288-5534, hsdecasper@triad.rr.com. To participate in the photo show: contact Carolyn Allen, 288-3045, texallen@aol.com.

Saturday, December 18

Christmas Bird Count

Contact count coordinator Elizabeth Link, 273-4672, elzlink@yahoo.com, if you can help. (See article page 1.)

Ventures Birding Tours

- by Emily Tyler



Simon Thompson was our speaker at the PBC's October meeting where he took us on a delightful tour "Birding the Tropics of South Texas." Simon's company, Ventures, Inc., leads one-day birding trips to locations within North and South Carolina, as well as longer ventures to exciting locations in South Africa, Colombia, Jordan, Ecuador,

Eastern Europe, Kazakhstan, and Peru, to name a few. From Simon's presentation last month, as well as his reputation as a birder and a great tour guide, it's safe to assume his trips would be outstanding. Go to www.birdventures.com for more information.



Piedmont Bird Club

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To:

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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.

[Unlikely Friends](#) Crow parents a kitten

[Ventures Birding Tours](#) November e-update from our October program speaker, Simon Thompson

[Baby Hummingbird Rescue](#)

find us on **facebook**



WELCOME TO THE PIEDMONT BIRD CLUB!

Rhett Trull

Anne Presnell

Cynthia Soemita

We invite you to post your photos and sightings on our Facebook page. Our 91 Facebook fans, only 25% of whom are PBC members, would love to see and hear what's going on.