



Piedmont Bird Club



An organization for lovers of wild birds
in North Carolina's Piedmont

Spring and Summer Summary

January – August 2017

Piedmont Bird Club Activity summaries are a compilation of key activities documented in membership meeting minutes and website postings. Included are notes on monthly programs, field trips, and other activities.

Membership Meeting Program Summaries

Using Partnerships to Build a Water-quality Monitoring Program at Lake Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge January 19, 2017

Dr. Michelle Moorman, an aquatic ecologist and a native of Greensboro, is field biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Dr. Moorman spoke about the efforts of several agencies – the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Wildlife Refuge System – to help conserve bird habitat at Lake Mattamuskeet. The mission of these agencies is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and other habitats.

Lake Matamuskeet is NC's largest lake. The refuge is 50,180 acres; the lake itself is 40,000 acres. The lake has an interesting history. It is a natural area, but has been highly altered. Swamps were drained to create the surrounding farmland in the 1800s and 1900s. Canals were also constructed. The draining project failed because it was not cost-effective.

The pumping plant was the world's largest at the time. The building is still there and was used as a lodge until the 1990s. The state took over the restoration of the lodge. It is now structurally sound but not open. There are plans to develop a public/private partnership for restoration since it is one

of the most important buildings in Hyde County.

Mattamuskeet was acquired in 1934 by the government for a National Wildlife Refuge for the purpose of protection and conservation of migrating birds and wintering waterfowl. Refuge visitors bring in \$11.5 million to the County.

The lake is on the Atlantic Flyway. High percentages of ducks and swans are on the refuge in winter, including 25-35% of Tundra Swans. Between 100,000 and 300,000 have been counted by aerial surveys in January.

Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), all native plants, provide food for wildlife. There are 2,600 acres of managed wetlands in the form of moist-soil impoundments. Flap gates allow water to flow in and out relative to levels in Pamlico Sound. The decline of SAV at Lake Mattamuskeet is a concern. It is now sparse on the east side of the lake. Water quality has gone from clear to turbid. The lake has become more eutrophic since the 1980s.

A collaborative team has been formed to improve water quality and grasses. The NC Wildlife Resources Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and others are developing a nine-element watershed plan. It will take one and a half years for the process of getting all stakeholders involved.

Birders are encouraged to attend Swan Days on the second weekend in December.

The North Carolina Zoo's Involvement in the Mariana Avifauna Conservation (MAC) Program February 16, 2017

Speaker Ms. Debbie Zombeck is Curator of Birds at the North Carolina Zoo. She was a keeper at Sea World before starting work at the zoo. Ms. Zombeck traveled to Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands where she assisted with capturing and translocating Golden White-eyes and Marianas Fruit Doves to the uninhabited island of Sarigan because of the threat from invasive Brown Tree Snakes.

The snakes arrived in cargo boats. Twelve of nineteen species of birds are affected by the snake. Detector dogs are now used to check 90% of cargo. There are two million tree snakes in Guam. This ecological disaster is described in the book *And No Birds Sing* by Mark Jaffe. The Brown Tree Snakes are attracted to transformers where they cause power outages.

The MAC Project was begun in 2006 by the AZA Division of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Pacific Bird Conservation. They moved fifty Golden White-eyes and ten Marianas Fruit Doves to the island of Sarigan. They were shipped in crates, which were very convenient to keep the birds from getting stressed. They eat mealworms, papaya, and pellet bird food. They seem to be thriving on their new island and are reproducing.

Another program mentioned was East Africa Vulture Conservation. The NC Zoo is working with the Wildlife Conservation Society in conducting vulture surveys and helping to develop a ranger training program. In Tanzania, vultures are threatened and dying in large numbers due to

poisoning. Farmers are putting poison on carcasses trying to kill lions and hyenas, which occasionally kill their livestock, and the poison is killing large numbers of vultures. Feral dogs are also a threat.

More information on the MAC Program can be found on the website,
<http://www.pacificbirdconservation.org/mariana-conservation-program-mac.html>.

The NC Zoo's R.J. Reynolds Aviary, established in 1982, is one of the best in the country. Some birds found there are Scarlet Ibis, a male Fairy Bluebird, African Pygmy Geese, Sunbittern, Pekin Robins, and Scarlet-faced Liocichla. The Deserts of the World exhibit also has lots of birds, including the White-headed Kookaburra.

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in North Carolina

March 16, 2017

Speaker Ms. Susan Miller, a zoologist with U.S. Fish and Wildlife since 1999, has worked at Ft. Bragg as a civilian biologist since the early 1990s. The Red-cockaded Woodpecker is North America's rarest woodpecker. Susan described her work with the woodpeckers, which has been focused on the Sandhills area of NC. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are endangered due to habitat loss from development, agriculture, fire suppression, and short-rotation forestry. The Sandhills habitat is between the Piedmont and Coastal Plain in NC, SC, and GA. About 4 ½ million acres of the longleaf pines preferred by the Red-cockaded Woodpecker remain; there were about 16 million acres over 500 years ago. It is a diverse ecosystem with high rainfall, poor soil, and wildfires.

Fires from lightning occur about every three years in the Sandhills. Fire is important to maintain the open, park-like forest. Without it, the habitat transitions to a sterile deciduous forest with no groundcover. Controlled fires mimic the natural process.

The Red-cockaded Woodpecker is a keystone species whose presence contributes to the diversity of the ecosystem. A white cheek patch is its most distinguishing feature. The red cockade is rarely seen and is only on the male. Juvenile males have a red crown patch that transitions to the cockade. The Red-cockaded Woodpecker is the only one who makes its cavity and nests in living pines. It takes six to eight years to make one cavity. The tree must be over 60 years old, and there must be enough dead wood in the middle of the tree with no sap to get a cavity. When the birds peck on it, the tree pushes out sap that keeps snakes away. The woodpeckers are non-migratory and territorial; several hundred acres are required for one breeding pair. Other group members are males from the previous season. Today, about 7730 groups (200,000 birds) occur from Florida to southeast Virginia and westward to eastern Texas.

Recovering the species is required on federally-owned land and optional on private land. Since 1990, a collaboration of federal and state landowners created the NC Sandhills conservation plan. Now over 30,500 acres are protected, including 4,500 acres are at Carvers Creek State Park. 2017 will be the 38th year for monitoring in the Sandhills. Recovery numbers were reached in 2005.

Artificial drilled cavities are used in younger forests. Another method is an insert box; they last 10-15 years. Birds readily use them. In the past, naturalists would climb trees and use mirrors to see inside the nests. Since 2000, they use “peepers” – cameras on a telescoping pole. Nestlings are pulled out at seven-days-old, banded, and weighed. Groups in a cluster of trees have the same color combination on one leg and a specific number and color on the other leg to identify the individual. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers live 8-10 years, some up to 19.

An easy place to see a Red-cockaded Woodpecker is at Weymouth Woods, where there is a cavity tree a few feet from the main building. Mid-May is an ideal time.

Eagles and Falcons: New Insights on Wintering Golden Eagles and Nesting Peregrine Falcons in Western North Carolina April 20, 2017

Lynn Moseley introduced the speaker, Chris Kelley, who is the Mountain Wildlife Diversity Biologist for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. In 1970, Peregrine Falcons were designated as endangered. Less than 100 were left in NC.

After DDT was banned, captive breeding birds were used to get them re-established. Ninety-two birds were released before 1997. The focus of this talk was on Peregrine Falcon monitoring in NC from 2003-2015. Territory occupancy, nest success, and productivity were the parameters that were tracked. 11 known sites had been found in NC as of 2003. In 2015, nests were found on 17 cliff sites and one city building. Nest success was 56% in NC, below the national average of 68%. Although factors contributing to nest failure were mostly unknown (49%), known factors included raven competition, human disturbance, storms, injuries, and predators in the vicinity. Golden Eagles were previously thought to be a rare fall migrant and winter visitor in NC, but now are known to be rarely seen but widely distributed in eastern North America.

In recent work, transmitters were placed on birds that were caught in West Virginia and Pennsylvania in winter. When they were tracked, it was found that some wandered further south in winter. In 2013, deer carcasses were placed at camera stations. Golden Eagles were documented at 17 of 26 sites surveyed in 16 NC counties. Threats include foot-hold traps, lead poisoning, habitat loss, and collision with wind turbines.

Field Trips

Bald Eagle Watch

January 14, 2017

Submitted by Lynn Moseley, Trip Leader

Eleven eager eagle enthusiasts gathered to look for “our” eagles in the northwest section of Lake Brandt, where the pair has nested since 2001. This year, however, we found no sign of an active nest. Some remains of the old nest, which had been in use since 2003 in the same pine tree, were visible. Assuming a nest is successful, eagles re-use the same nest for years, adding new branches and sticks each year. Thus it is certainly possible that the structure collapsed under its own weight.

We noted that Great Blue Herons have expanded their rookery to the pine trees just southwest of the former eagle nest. Combined with the nests that are regularly found in the bald cypress trees in that part of the lake, there should be about 20 pairs of herons in the rookery this spring.

Additional note: on February 22, I searched the margins of Lake Brandt by boat with the help of Neil Thompson, one of the lake wardens there. We found no trace of a nest in that section of the lake, although we observed two adult eagles perched in the vicinity of the old nest site. However, since both adults were seen simultaneously in the same area, if they are indeed a pair, they are not nesting since one of them would be incubating eggs or brooding chicks at that time of year.

White Street Landfill Field Trip

January 21, 2017

Submitted by Lynn Moseley, Trip Leader

Fifteen birders, including PBC members and guests, spent an active morning at the landfill. A total of 45 species were found, with highlights including a flock of 10 Wild Turkeys, 2 American Kestrels, 5 species of sparrows (Field, Savanna, Song, Swamp, and White-throated), 16 Killdeer, and 23 Eastern Meadowlarks. Several ducks were spotted in the pond near the entrance, including Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, and Hooded Merganser. Although we were disappointed to miss the Ravens and Northern Harrier that are occasionally seen at this site, we did find Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and Fish Crows. The landfill is always a productive site for interesting winter birds.



Killdeer

Photo Credit: Ann Van Sant



Red-tailed Hawk
Photo Credit: Ann Van Sant



Eastern Meadowlark
Photo Credit: Ann Van Sant

Greensboro Lakes for Waterfowl January 28, 2017

Submitted by Dennis Burnette, Trip Leader



Photo Credit: Lynn Allison

We had a fun field trip on our winter waterfowl search. It was a cold but sunny morning under a beautiful Carolina blue sky. We made stops at lake and marsh overlooks in north Greensboro.

Along the way, we found a huge conglomeration of mostly Double-crested Cormorants and Ring-billed Gulls. Pied-billed Grebes were in several spots. Ducks were sparse but we managed to see Ruddy Duck, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, American Black Duck,



Photo Credit: Lynn Allison

Hooded Merganser, and Bufflehead among the resident Mallards, Canada Geese, and introduced European Mute Swans and Muscovy Ducks.

One of the highlights didn't involve waterfowl at all; we pulled off the road to watch a cleanup crew of half a dozen Black Vultures working on an unidentified "road pancake." It would be hard to get better close up views of this species. We had a great group of congenial folks on this great morning of fun birding.



Photo Credit: Lynn Allison



Photo Credit: Lynn Allison

Impromptu Trip to Inner/Outer Banks, NC February 16-19, 2017

Submitted by Julien McCarthy, Field Trip Committee Chair

Arriving at the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR at about 2:00 p.m. on February 16, 2017, seven of us began an intense and thorough expedition to see as many species on the inner/outer banks of coastal North Carolina as we could. We immediately found thousands of huge, snow-white Tundra Swans soaring out of Lake Pungo headed west. Very strong wind lifted the plump birds to altitude abruptly, but their vocalizations were still quite melodious and there were constant wedges filling the sky. As we traversed the rough backroads of the refuge, we sighted frequent Northern Harriers cruising low over cut fields in search of their prey. Thousands of various species of shiny blackbirds flew by in flexing waves, occasionally perching and posing for identification.

Moving on to the famous Kuralt overlook at Lake Pungo, we witnessed a Bald Eagle overflight which flushed several thousand Snow Geese revealing the alternate Blue Goose race within the gigantic flock. Passing the interior impoundments, we found a very dense population of Tundra Swans and ducks, including Shovelers, Pintails, Mallards, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Gadwalls, Black Ducks, and Canada Geese. The scrub was packed with Yellow Rump Warblers, but most passerines were hunkered down from the brutal, cold wind. Finally, at the far end of Canal C road, we found Black Bears: two of them at a distance. From there we drove the necessary four wheelers to the entrance where several American Woodcocks launched into their vertical courtship display vocalizing the "peeeent" and creating the distinctive whistling sound with their wings as they descended. There also wandered another large bear much closer at hand while several Brown Thrashers buzzed good nights to the world. By now it was nearly dark so we caravanned to Martell's restaurant in Engelhard and dined on generous plates of delicious local seafood. Full to the gills, we headed another three miles or so down the road to the Hotel Engelhard where the proprietors, Bob and Ursula (also their pet cats Tiger, Bullseye, and Mr. Hyde), had rooms ready for

that inevitable crash into a sound sleep.

Fully rested and raring to head out for a full day at Matamuskeet NWR, we first were served breakfast by Bob and Ursula (extraordinarily accommodating hostlers) and enjoyed some banter before leaving the warmth of the hotel. Within five minutes we were on North Lake Drive at a slow pace alert for both passerines and waterfowl. Many flooded fields provided sanctuary to White Ibises and Great Egrets as we passed along towards the Route 94 causeway. A Red-shouldered Hawk showed up on a pole and Bald Eagles were numerous. A Black Vulture was sighted and of course, Turkey Vultures as well. Arriving at a private pier on Lake Matamuskeet, we were surprised at the total absence of waterfowl. Matamuskeet is in crisis, no doubt. We were none-the-less delighted to turn up a Black and White Warbler and a Golden-crowned Kinglet close in cypress trees at the wildlife drive. Inside the main refuge entrance, the usual ducks, including a sleeping Ruddy, were there in paltry numbers, but a sleeping Black-crowned Night Heron right next to a regal Great Blue Heron posed indefinitely. A resting white-tailed deer peered over a small raft of dabblers just at the edge of the marsh making a wonderful photo-op. We spotted a nutria, which is a notorious invasive rodent which is taking over there.

After a brief stop at the visitors center for a break, we drove out to "the point" where there was a Pileated Woodpecker but nothing else. Moving on to the canal road, we were disappointed to discover a series of closed roads making observation very difficult. However, after lunch near the canal we strolled along the interesting boardwalk at the end of the road and gleaned a fabulous Marsh Wren, a Common Yellowthroat, and an active Blue Heron rookery. Frogs croaked as we headed out for Lake Landing Road towards the east end of Lake Matamuskeet. Lake Landing Road was also paltry with few waterfowl to see. Some of us hiked out onto a dike hoping for an American Bittern, but found Tree Swallows instead and a Hooded Merganser. Eagles were again abundant in the distance though.

It appears that Matamuskeet's water levels may be significantly depressing waterfowl visitation to the refuge: sad! However, at the last moment there was a massive overflight of ducks by the thousands at great altitude lasting tens of minutes – awesome V-formation strings! They were headed in the direction of Pamlico Sound. Heading out for Engelhard again, we decided to do a last-minute look at the waters of the local fishing fleet's marina where we could see Common Mergansers and there they were, very close. A Brown Pelican roosted upon a piling was a surprise while gulls were on the rest of the posts. It was dinner time and an unidentifiable, large owl dove across the road just in front of the car. Trying a small new restaurant was experimental resulting in a decision to eat elsewhere the next night. Very tired we retreated to our rooms wilting into our beds for a much-needed sleep.

The next morning Ursula had breakfast ready at 7:00 a.m. again, and after that warm meal and pats to Tiger's head, we headed for the Outer Banks. On the causeway beyond Manteo, there was a close Common Loon so we stopped for pictures. Next stop was Jeanette's Pier but no luck, so it was on to Bodie Island where things really perked up. On the way in, Brown Headed Nuthatches were squeaking. On the boardwalk, we spotted roosting American Avocets, a Greater Yellowlegs, and Long-billed Dowitchers, and most of the dabblers were also present. Wow! It was then on to Pea Island NWR for a quick stay at the visitors' center, but there was a strong presence of shorebirds in

the north end of North Pond so we stopped to scope things out and discovered Semi-palmated Plovers, Black-bellied Plovers, Dunlins, Sanderlings, Western Sandpipers, and a Willet. At the center, rumored White Pelicans were sighted, and most of the expected ducks, swans, and geese were in glorious profusion. On a stroll out to the dike separating North and South Ponds we flushed the American Bittern and got the missing Downy Woodpecker. It was time to return to Jeanette's Pier for the evening flight and guess what showed up? Razor Bills and Hump-Back Whales. BINGO! Time to eat supper, and we decided to eat at the famed Bass Knights Restaurant on the causeway: good food. The trip to Engelhard was about an hour from there, so birding was over.

Sunday morning was departure day, but on the way back some participants birded at Alligator River NWR and on the boardwalk at the Pocosin Lakes NWR visitors' center in Columbia. While cruising the empty impoundments along Sawyer Road (why were they empty all winter?), into the scope popped a flock of Wilson' Snipe posing for pictures, but there was little else except for a few Greater Yellowlegs. A sleek River Otter popped up for pictures in the canal too. On the boardwalk at the refuge center, a Pine Warbler showed up, and there was a fabulous Hairy Woodpecker hammering out its new nesting cavity and posing for pictures.

In conclusion, in spite of gaping holes in the expected common species sightings, we identified 101 species of birds and many other interesting animals. Events like Bald Eagle predation; vast, vast swarms of ducks and geese; Black Bear activity; and spouting Hump-Back Whales augmented the excitement of the experience a great deal. For February the weather was very reasonable: NO RAIN! We remained in very good communication using walkie-talkies and our coordination was very comfortable. We all returned healthy and fulfilled, freshly loaded with good stories to tell. You just couldn't have had a more wholesome, rewarding experience!

Nantucket Village April 9, 2017

Submitted by Roberta Newton, Trip Leader

Birding at Tucket on April 9, 2017 was a pleasant and profitable day. Although cool weather greeted the birders, the sun quickly warmed up the group. Roberta Newton led the group of five birders while Ann Van Sant birded from the screen porch. Thirty-five species were recorded and are listed below. As the group trekked across the farm field and along the edge of the woods, a Cooper's Hawk watched, and then a Northern Harrier passed through. Stella Wear reminded the group to always look up, and we were rewarded with a flyover of a

flock of Double-crested Cormorants – in fact, a total of three separate flocks were seen flying from the Lake Brandt area to Lake Townsend. A Field Sparrow was a life bird for a new birder, Carlee Bane. The walk continued through a wooded area, yielding Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers, woodpeckers, and other species. The trek ended on a high point – a Bald Eagle soaring overhead. Ann



*Bald Eagle
Photo Credit: Ann Van Sant*

photographed the Bald Eagle. The group then ate a light lunch complete with home-made bird shaped and decorated cookies, compliments of Ann.

Bird List

Double-crested Cormorant	Tufted Titmouse	Dark-eyed Junco
Turkey Vulture	White-breasted Nuthatch	White-throated Sparrow
Northern Harrier	Carolina Wren	Song Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Eastern Towhee
Bald Eagle	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Northern Cardinal
Red-shouldered Hawk	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Common Grackle
Mourning Dove	Eastern Bluebird	Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-bellied Woodpecker	American Robin	House Finch
Downy Woodpecker	Brown Thrasher	American Goldfinch
Northern Flicker	Northern Mockingbird	
Blue Jay	European Starling	
American Crow	Chipping Sparrow	
Carolina Chickadee	Field Sparrow	

Sit-a-Spell May 2, 2017

Submitted by Julien McCarthy, Trip Leader



Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

At 9:00 a.m. on May 2, a few Piedmont Bird Club members wielded comfortable, portable chairs, binoculars, and a scope down the trail at the Richardson/Taylor Preserve on Plainfield Road in Guilford County near Lake Townsend. This trail leads to a great variety of habitat including hardwood and conifer stands, swamps, beaver dams, open fields, standing dead trees, and creeks. In close proximity, it hosts a broad population of bird species.



Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

We spent about 45 minutes at three locations allowing the surrounding habitats to “come alive” as we sat comfortably observing the movements of the birds. We whispered to each other as each of us noticed new species so everyone could share the sightings. The magnificent Red-headed Woodpecker was abundant as were three species of swallows. The Eastern Kingbird was a bit of a surprise as was the Orchard Oriole couple, but the cute Common Yellow Throat was everywhere. Several noisy, gorgeous Scarlet Tanagers revealed themselves in the crowns of tall, leafy trees, and the usual Great Blue Herons glided just above the beaver ponds. In the distance was the unmistakably melodious song of the Wood Thrush.



*Eastern Kingbird
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy*

The hike was no more than 1.5 miles, and the terrain was rather easy with a few uphill sections. Things wound up at about 12:30 p.m., and our species total was 47, which “ain’t bad” for such a short time. If you have not gone to this preserve, be sure to do so soon for a splendid birding experience!



*Red-headed Woodpecker
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy*



*Scarlet Tanager
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy*



*Tree Swallow
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy*

Randolph County Preserve May 7, 2017

*Submitted by Julien McCarthy, Field Trips Chair
Trip Leader: Craig Lawrence*

From time to time certain members in the Piedmont Bird Club “go the extra mile.” These are examples of genuine dedication to the club and all its members. One of the most popular and productive field trips, the Randolph County Preserve trip, which occurred on Sunday, May 7, was a large success despite the absence of its cherished leader, Jane Lawrence, whose father lay gravely injured in Spain from a motorcycle accident.

In her absence, her husband Craig Lawrence hastily assembled some members to help lead folks through the magnificent preserve making sure that those members planning to attend would not be disappointed. Though Jane’s “birding by ear” segment was missed due to her absence, no one missed an opportunity to identify a bird, and some brand new birders were overjoyed with the experience.

Craig shouldered a lot of responsibility for the day. Nevertheless, by recruiting veteran birders and especially Mark Lewis to lead folks around the preserve, he kept the PBC experience at nearly 100%.

As a member of the Field Trips Committee, I am sure I speak for our entire committee and the PBC membership as I salute the dedication and integrity displayed by Craig Lawrence last Sunday.

Warbler Road and Whitetop Mountain May 13-15, 2017

Submitted by George Wheaton, Trip Co-Chair

Ten members of the Piedmont Bird Club (PBC) journeyed forth to the mountains of southwestern Virginia. Our objective was to find some mid-spring birds, including migrants and nesting species. We were not disappointed. The weather reports had been promising heavy rain, but these forecasts were off the mark. We enjoyed sunny and very pleasant days from Saturday through Monday. On our last morning, it was a little chilly and quite breezy on the summit of Whitetop but not uncomfortable. The many nesting Dark-eyed Juncos and Red-breasted Nuthatches seemed to enjoy it there.

The birding was slower than usual as we birded our way up from Arcadia to the Peaks of Otter on Saturday. Perhaps this was due to our slow pace, our determination to check out every vocalization, and the fact that we didn’t start birding until 10:00. Nevertheless, we did see many nice birds. On Sunday, we got an early start and began birding from the Peaks of Otter down to the

Arcadia area. This reverse strategy produced many of the birds we were hoping to see. In the afternoon, half of our group returned home and the rest headed for Glade Spring, VA where we spent the night. We got out early on Monday morning and were birding at Whitetop shortly after 8:00. We enjoyed some new birds and outstanding scenery. We left for home shortly after noon and arrived in Greensboro tired but happy.

Our group maintained three lists: birds, wild flowers, and other critters. We ticked 79 species of birds, including 16 species of warblers. The avian highlights included: a displaying Ruffed Grouse along Warbler Road on Sunday morning (unfortunately not seen by everyone in the group); a show-stopping and very cooperative Cerulean Warbler (along Warbler Road, also on Sunday morning); and a stunning and cooperative male Chestnut-sided Warbler at point blank range on the summit of Whitetop. The “flower people” in our group saw and photographed many species of wildflowers, only the showier of which are listed below. In addition, we saw a few other critters as noted below.

BIRDS

Canada Goose	Black-capped Chickadee	American Redstart
Wild Turkey		Worm-eating Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Tufted Titmouse	Ovenbird
Great Blue Heron	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Louisiana Waterthrush
Black Vulture	White-breasted Nuthatch	Common Yellowthroat
Turkey Vulture	Carolina Wren	Hooded Warbler
Bald Eagle	Golden-crowned Kinglet	
Red-tailed Hawk	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Canada Warbler
Rock Pigeon	Eastern Bluebird	Scarlet Tanager
Mourning Dove	Veery	Eastern Towhee
	Wood Thrush	Chipping Sparrow
Chimney Swift	American Robin	Field Sparrow
Reb-bellied Woodpecker		Song Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	Gray Catbird	Dark-eyed Junco
Hairy Woodpecker	Northern Mockingbird	Northern Cardinal
Northern Flicker	Brown Thrasher	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Pileated Woodpecker	European Starling	Blue Grosbeak
Eastern Wood-Pee-wee	Cedar Waxwing	
Eastern Phoebe	Yellow Warbler	Indigo Bunting
Eastern Kingbird	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
White-eyed Vireo	Magnolia Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Blue-headed Vireo	Black-throated Blue Warbler	Common Grackle
Warbling Vireo	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-eyed Vireo		Orchard Oriole
Blue Jay	Black-throated Green	Baltimore Oriole
American Crow	Warbler	House Finch
Common Raven	Blackburnian Warbler	American Goldfinch
Tree Swallow	Cerulean Warbler	House Sparrow
Carolina Chickadee	Black & White Warbler	

PLANTS/SHRUBS/TREES (Ann Walter-Fromson)

Large-flowered Trillium (*Trillium grandiflora*)
Wake Robin (*Trillium erectum*)
Indian Physic/Bowman's Root (*Gillenia trifoliata*)
Robin's Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*)
Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)
Beardtongue (*Penstemon sp.*)
Virginia Spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*)
Fire Pink (*Silene virginica*)
Showy Orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*)
Wood Betony/Lousewort (*Pedicularis canadensis*)
Star Chickweed/Giant Chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*)
Pinxterflower (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*)
Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)
Flame Azalea (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*)
Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)

OTHER CRITTERS (Ann Walter-Fromson)

White-tailed Deer
Gray Squirrel
Chipmunk
Groundhog/Woodchuck
Green Frog
Turtle, sp.

Birding from Kayaks on Lake Randleman May 21, 2017

Submitted by Julien McCarthy, Trip Leader



Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

It was foggy on the wild side of Lake Randleman and a bit cool and breezy as ten of us departed the kayak launch in search of birds and any wildlife that might show. We had already seen a nice Indigo Bunting and an Eastern Kingbird at the launch area.



Great Blue Heron Rookery
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy



Red-tailed Hawk's Nest
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

As we rounded the close island we heard a Scarlet Tanager singing in the tall forest to our right. Easing on towards headwaters at Wall Road, we came across many Common Yellowthroats and even an Orchard Oriole. Many regal Great Blue Herons passed us by on their way back and forth from their lofty rookery.

With Blue-gray Gnatcatchers wheezing in the trees and American Goldfinches chirping away, we noticed the Red-tailed Hawk's nest high in a hickory tree above the water's edge. At first it looked like the juveniles had fledged, but no, here came an adult with prey in talon so we stayed for the show and what a show it was as the juvenile was fed the prey by the adults: yum, yum. Eventually both parents came to the nest calling out that typical raspy vocalization.

Suddenly along the bank, we were treated by the cavorting of an Eastern Kingbird couple up close to the fleet, and across the water a Yellow-billed Cuckoo clucked away out of sight, but loud and obvious. The gorgeous Orchard Oriole couple put on a display just above us, apparently setting up house.



Eastern Kingbirds
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

If things weren't already good enough, up cropped a mystery bird high in a snag. We could not get enough field marks, but then it flew to another snag and perched just above a Pileated Woodpecker. It was a Merlin, and the Pileated dispatched it from the spar rather quickly. We made it to the turnabout, found a resting spot, and stayed for a snack break.

The ever-present Red-eyed vireo never quit singing, but the Prothonotary Warbler did not show. Heading in, we turned up Northern Parulas and Prairie warblers, as well as Purple Martins and a few more of the expected birds.

We garnered forty species, which was pretty good. It would have been better but for the cool and cloudy conditions, I think. Nevertheless, all of us were delighted with the companionship over a

morning of intense birding from kayaks. If you haven't done it, go out there, or you'll miss a really rewarding birding experience.



Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

Activities

2017 PBC Minigrant Program

Submitted by Diana Bowman, Minigrant Chair

In January, PBC awarded minigrants in the amounts of \$250.00 to

- Paul Siceloff, Southwest Renewal Foundation: Native Perennial Garden next to Fairview Elementary School in High Point
- Bruce Billings and Tripti Suwal, PBC members: Maintain and Replace Wood Duck Nest Boxes within Greensboro Lakes
- Ann Stringfield, Friends of Green Hill Cemetery: Five Bluebird Houses and Occluders for Green Hill Cemetery
- Susan Campbell, independent researcher: Website Development for NC Hummingbirds

Applications were received by the December 1, 2016 deadline. A committee of four PBC members reviewed the applications.

2017 PBC Minigrant Project Wood Duck Box Restoration on Lake Brandt

Submitted by Bruce Billings and Tripti Suwal, 2017 PBC Minigrant Awardees

If you've ever walked around the trails that border the Greensboro lakes, then you've probably seen some of the Wood Duck boxes that stand just off the shoreline. Many of these boxes were put up over 10 years ago and in that time the boxes have weathered significantly. The shoreline has also begun to encroach upon these boxes due to the buildup of sediment. With these expanding shorelines comes the growth of trees and shrubs and the potential for predators to invade wood duck boxes during the nesting season.



Two members of the PBC, Bruce Billings and Tripti Suwal, took notice of these boxes and decided that some of them needed to be replaced or repaired. They applied for one of the PBC minigrants in an effort to restore a few of the wood duck boxes on Lake Brandt and were granted \$250.



With the funds they were able to purchase a kit of 6 white cedar wood duck boxes for \$220. White cedar naturally resists weather and insect damage, making it an ideal lumber to use for the project. Bruce was able to assemble these boxes with help from Mark Burns, a friend of the PBC who builds birdhouses as a hobby.

Once the houses were built, Bruce and Tripti contacted Greensboro Parks and Recreation to see what the next steps should be. With the help of Michael Romano and Neil Thompson, they decided to take down some of the damaged wood duck boxes and reuse the posts for the new boxes. This task proved much harder to accomplish than anticipated. The old posts were firmly stuck in the mud of Lake Brandt and too close to the encroaching shore to ensure a safe distance between the new boxes and any low hanging branches.

Neil and Michael suggested that the Parks and Recreation Department purchase new poles, under the condition that predator guards also be used. Bruce and Tripti were able to use the remaining money from the grant to assemble 6 predator guards.

Once all the materials were gathered, Neil and Bruce assembled each pole and installed all 6 boxes in the western part of Lake Brandt. In fact if you travel north from Greensboro on Highway 220 you may be able to see the wood duck boxes that were installed. There are 3 just west of the bridge and 3 east of the bridge.



Price Park Clean-up March 18, 2017

Submitted by Tom Wear, Conservation Committee Co-chair

The Saturday morning rain ended well before the appointed hour of 9:00 a.m. A few hardy souls arrived to participate while several more were likely deterred by the rain. This Spring Clean-up was redirected to Price Park at the suggestion Country Park Manager Brian Pugh. Country Park receives plenty of clean-up attention during the year and needs only one clean-up per year from PBC. We will return to Country Park in the fall.

Ann Steighner, Ann Walter-Fromson, Marion Gamble, Rebecca Dellinger-Johnston, Stella Wear, and Tom Wear dug into Price Park, concentrating around Katherine Clay Edwards Family Library at first. We then scoured the trails to and across Hobbs Street into the area known as Highwoods Trail.

Highwoods Trail is a non-public area located between Jefferson Village and the lake at the Hebrew Academy. Many PBC members enjoy birding there throughout the year. Other wildlife can be seen there, also. Cleaning-up there is owed for the enjoyment received by many.

It was there that the mother-lode of litter was found. As you can see in the “after” photo, a small mountain of trash was collected in under two hours. More needs to be done there. In the future, we will spend more time there, as well as Price Park.



Before



After

Beginning Birder Workshop: How to Identify Birds March 26, 2017

*Submitted by Lynn Burnette
Leader: Dennis Burnette*

We had a great turn out of 35 folks for our Beginning Birder Workshop entitled "How to Identify Birds" on Sunday afternoon, March 26.

This was the second of three workshops focused on how to get started watching and identifying birds. It began with a 45-minute indoor class, followed by bird identification practice outdoors. It was conducted by Dennis Burnette.



Photo Credit: Lynn Burnette

Several experienced birders served as mentors to answer questions and give practical tips. Thanks to Lynn Allison, Lynn Burnette, Jim Eldrett, Mike Howard, Lyn McCoy, Roberta Newton, Emily Tyler, Ann Van Sant, Stella Wear, and Tom Wear for sharing their knowledge with our new birders.

Special thanks go to Stella and Tom Wear, who bought seed and filled the bird feeders ahead of time at the KCE Family Branch Library so that we would have more birds to watch.

Beginning Birder Workshop: How to Attract Birds to our Gardens and Feeders

April 23, 2017

Submitted by Lynn Burnette

Workshop Leader: Dennis Burnette

On Sunday afternoon, April 23, the Piedmont Bird Club and T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society held the third and final beginning birder workshop of the year at the KCE Family Branch Library in Price Park.

The topic, "How to Attract Birds to Our Gardens and Feeders," focused on bird food, bird feeders, and bird friendly plants in our home landscapes.

The presenter was Dennis Burnette, who is past president of TGPAS and a current member of the TGPAS board, past president of Piedmont Bird Club, and a past vice president of the Carolina Bird Club.



Tufted Titmouse

Photo Credit: Dennis Burnette

The topic of each of these workshops has been different for each session. The workshops included a 45-minute classroom presentation and discussion. In the first two workshops, that was followed by about 45 minutes outside to practice skills.

Unfortunately, the weather didn't cooperate this time so we stayed dry inside and discussed issues and questions about bird feeding. Thanks go to Lynn Allison, Lynn Burnette, Jim Eldrett, and Judy Hoag who were on hand as mentors to help answer the questions.

Thanks also to Jim Eldrett for filling the bird feeders around the library so that they would attract birds while we were there. We finished the workshop by staying indoors and watching one of the feeders he filled through the large window at the west end of the library as birds came in for a bite to eat during the rain.

Spring Bird Count

April 29, 2017

Submitted by Elizabeth Link, Bird Count Compiler

The Spring Count in Greensboro was held on April 29. The weather was warm for the time of year, with a low of 72 and a high of 86 degrees. Skies were partly to mostly cloudy and winds were light,

averaging 10 m.p.h. with an occasional gust to 20 m.p.h. There was no precipitation. A front had stalled over the area Thursday night, making for some interesting count week birds. Some of those birds had left by Saturday, but enough of them hung around to have a pretty good count.

Thirty-four counters took part in the count, a few more than our average of thirty. Those counters put in 98.25 party hours, slightly lower than our average of 103.

At this point I should note that George Wheaton's work in hunting down and consolidating 50 years of Spring Count data, as well as Roberta Newton's work in creating bar graphs for each species, has made comparisons of this year's count with previous years' data infinitely easier than in the past. I chose to use the last 20 years of data for averages, as being relevant to current conditions, so all references to an "average" refer to the last 20 years.

For this year's count, we had a total of 121 species which is slightly lower than our average of 125. For the last 20 years, our highest species count was 136 in 2005, and lowest was 110 in 2010.

The number of individual birds counted was 9,039. This was well above our average of 7,221. I went back to 1995 for a year in which a larger number of birds (9,625) was counted.

Notables included a Greater Scaup, found by Clarence Mattocks' group on a retention pond, the first occurrence of a Greater Scaup in the 50 years of records, and a Black-billed Cuckoo found by Henry Link.

Many thanks to all who made the count possible through their participation:

Nancy Adamson, Carolyn Allen, Bruce Billings, Jim Buchanan, Dennis Burnette, Lynn Burnette, Sue Cole, Scott DePue, Jim Eldrett, Lynne Gray, Craig Lawrence, Jane Lawrence, Elizabeth Link, Henry Link, Clarence Mattocks, Lyn McCoy, Lynn Moseley, Jean Murdick, Lauren Murdick, Roberta Newton, Lane Oldham, Ann Presnell, Danny Royster, Tripti Sawal, Wallace Sills, Lou Skrabec, Ann Steighner, Jim Strickland, Emily Tyler, Ann VanSant, Ann Walter-Fromson, Matt Wangarin, Stella Wear, and Melissa Whitmire.

The results of the count are below: (cw = count week bird)

2017 Spring Bird Count List

	TOTAL				
Canada Goose	501	American Kestrel	1	Louisiana Waterthrush	2
Wood Duck	13	Eastern Wood-Pewee	5	Northern Waterthrush	2
American Wigeon	cw	Acadian Flycatcher	2	Black-and-white Warbler	17
Mallard	94	Eastern Phoebe	43	Prothonotary Warbler	2
Greater Scaup	1	Great Crested Flycatcher	36	Common Yellowthroat	49
Red-breasted Merganser	cw	Eastern Kingbird	23	Hooded Warbler	1
Hooded Merganser	1	White-eyed Vireo	8	American Redstart	22
Wild Turkey	4	Blue-headed Vireo	6	Cape May Warbler	1
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Red-eyed Vireo	88	Northern Parula	55
Rock Pigeon	239	Blue Jay	153	Blackburnian Warbler	1
Mourning Dove	207	American Crow	324	Black-throated Blue Warbler	37
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Fish Crow	29	Palm Warbler	5
Chimney Swift	254	Common Raven	1	Pine Warbler	32
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	8	Purple Martin	328	Yellow-rumped Warbler	90
Killdeer	39	Bank Swallow	2	Prairie Warbler	17
Least Sandpiper	1	Tree Swallow	66	Black-throated Green Warbler	2
Spotted Sandpiper	6	North. Rough-winged Swallow	84	Yellow-breasted Chat	8
Solitary Sandpiper	16	Cliff Swallow	92	Eastern Towhee	127
Greater Yellowlegs	cw	Barn Swallow	50	Chipping Sparrow	108
Ring-billed Gull	66	Carolina Chickadee	161	Field Sparrow	19
Caspian Tern	cw	Tufted Titmouse	209	Savannah Sparrow	1
Double-crested Cormorant	447	White-breasted Nuthatch	31	Grasshopper Sparrow	9
Great Blue Heron	145	Brown-headed Nuthatch	43	Song Sparrow	119
Great Egret	2	House Wren	28	White-throated Sparrow	74
Green Heron	2	Carolina Wren	177	Summer Tanager	8
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	2	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	87	Scarlet Tanager	17
Black Vulture	53	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	11	Northern Cardinal	485
Turkey Vulture	78	Eastern Bluebird	163	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	cw
Osprey	9	Veery	1	Blue Grosbeak	6
Mississippi Kite	cw	Gray-cheeked Thrush	1	Indigo Bunting	59
Bald Eagle	1	Swainson's Thrush	2	Bobolink	10
Cooper's Hawk	7	Wood Thrush	33	Red-winged Blackbird	48
Red-shouldered Hawk	20	American Robin	370	Eastern Meadowlark	41
Broad-winged Hawk	2	Gray Catbird	120	Common Grackle	392
Red-tailed Hawk	16	Brown Thrasher	40	Brown-headed Cowbird	50
Great Horned Owl	1	Northern Mockingbird	171	Orchard Oriole	19
Barred Owl	12	American Pipit	1	Baltimore Oriole	4
Belted Kingfisher	6	European Starling	435	Black-billed Cuckoo	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	2	Cedar Waxwing	468	Ring-necked Ducks	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	128	House Sparrow	20		
Downy Woodpecker	49	House Finch	146		
Hairy Woodpecker	6	American Goldfinch	544	Total individuals	9,039
Northern Flicker	23	Ovenbird	16	Total species count day	121
Pileated Woodpecker	12	Worm-eating Warbler	2	Total Species count week	6

Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring April-August 2017

Submitted by Bruce Billings, Project Coordinator

From April to August, a team of Piedmont Bird Club members monitored 25 Eastern Bluebird nest boxes at Country Park on a weekly basis and recorded their observations.

It was a really good year with some interesting encounters. John Shea and Connie Holt got to observe a chick coming out of its shell. And Lynne Gray and Rebecca Dellinger-Johnston cleared a box of a black snake!

Other PBC members who volunteered this year were: Jayne Henry, Stewart Redden, Sandy Redden, Ann Steigner, Diana Bowman, and Mike Howard. Also, a special thanks goes out to Cal Weimer for developing a fantastic system for collecting data and monitoring the bluebird boxes.

Below are some of the data that collected from the previous two years:

	Year 2017	Year 2016
Total Bluebird eggs	131	114
Total Bluebirds hatched	118	106
Total Bluebirds fledged	110	105
Total Chickadee eggs	5	10
Total Chickadees hatched	5	10
Total Chickadees fledged	5	10
Total BHNH eggs	5	6
Total BHNH hatched	5	6
Total BHNH fledged	5	6
Date of first egg	4/2/17	3/31/16
Date of last fledgings	8/11/17	8/11/16

Each year PBC shares its monitoring data with the NC Bluebird Society.