

North Carolina Outer Banks and Lake Mattamuskeet Area November 23-26, 2017

Submitted by Carlene Bane, Participant

I am relatively new to bird watching, and the recent trip to the Outer Banks over the 2017 Thanksgiving holiday was my first long-distance/overnight bird watching field trip. As a new member of the Piedmont Bird Club, I thought that the trip would be a great opportunity to get to know members of the organization, learn from the experiences of others, and see some great birds. The adventure not only fulfilled these hopes, but far exceeded all of my expectations. I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend!

One of my favorite highlights of the trip occurred when we least expected it, just minutes from where we were staying. A member of our group spotted a heron flying overhead that landed in a nearby bush. Luckily, we stopped to investigate and were rewarded with some excellent birds. In this bush we were able to see Black-Crowned Night Herons (a life bird), Great Egrets, and Tri-Colored Herons all within our view. It was an absolutely incredible experience to be able to observe these birds for a period of time and be able to notice the fine details of their plumage.

Another favorite part of the trip was our journey to Lake Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Here, we were able to see a great number of Tundra Swans, another life bird for me, and many other species of waterfowl. The sound of hundreds of Tundra Swans is one that I will never forget. One of my favorite parts about the trip was the approach the group took at each location. Rather than rushing along, we stopped and observed birds in detail, especially the waterfowl on the lake. I have only had a few opportunities to use a spotting scope, and Emily Tyler, trip leader, was kind enough to bring hers along. I was amazed at how many details I could see in each duck. I found it extremely helpful to examine the birds at the higher magnification and notice detailed field markings.

I also really enjoyed our trip to Jennette's Pier where I added another new species to my life list, the Boat-tailed Grackle. It was very enjoyable watching the clever birds stealing bits of fish each time an unsuspecting fisherman turned his or her back. Watching the sun set over the land from the pier was a new perspective of a sunset that I found to have unmatched beauty.

Over the course of the trip, I added a total of 16 birds to my life list, including a Lesser Yellow-legs, American Kestrel, Dunlin, American Widgeon, Northern Harrier, and White Ibis. As a beginning birder, many of the species that we saw would have been a challenge to identify had I been on my own. Members of the group pointed out details, such as the white rump patch of the Northern Harrier, that helped me to identify birds both on the trip and in the future. I feel so fortunate to have had such an experienced, patient, and attentive bird watching team to help me out on this journey. Each member of the group pointed out fine details and field markings, answered my many questions, and helped me to improve my bird watching techniques. I learned so much on the trip! After taking the time

to study and observe so many birds, I returned home feeling passionate about bird watching and excited to share my new experiences.

Itinerary:

Thursday Nov 23 - Lake Mattamuskeet NWR

Friday Nov 24 - Pea Island

Saturday Nov 25 - Alligator River NWR, Coquina Beach, Bodie Island, Jennette's Pier at Nags Head

Participants: Emily Tyler (leader), Carlee Bane, Jayne Henry, Anne Presnell, Dale Stoneman

Bird List

Snow Goose	Tricolored Heron	Eastern Phoebe
Canada Goose	Black-crowned Night Heron	Blue Jay
Tundra Swan	White Ibis	American Crow
Gadwall	Turkey Vulture	Tree Swallow
American Wigeon	Bald Eagle	Carolina Chickadee
American Black Duck	Northern Harrier	Tufted Titmouse
Mallard	Red-shouldered Hawk	Carolina Wren
Blue-winged Teal	Red-tailed Hawk	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Northern Shoveler	American Kestrel	Gray Catbird
Northern Pintail	American Coot	Northern Mockingbird
Green-winged Teal	Black-bellied Plover	European Starling
Redhead	Killdeer	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Lesser Yellowlegs	Pine Warbler
Black Scoter	Dunlin	Chipping Sparrow
Bufflehead	Laughing Gull	Savannah Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Ring-billed Gull	Swamp Sparrow
Common Loon	Great Black-backed Gull	Dark-eyed Junco
Pied-billed Grebe	Royal Tern	Northern Cardinal
Northern Gannet	Rock Pigeon	Red-winged Blackbird
Double-crested Cormorant	Mourning Dove	Eastern Meadowlark
American White Pelican	Belted Kingfisher	Common Grackle
Brown Pelican	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Boat-tailed Grackle
Great Blue Heron	Downy Woodpecker	House Sparrow
Great Egret	Northern Flicker	Total Species: 73
Little Blue Heron	Pileated Woodpecker	