

# THE BULLETIN

## Chapel Hill Bird Club

c/o C. W. Cook  
418 Sharon Rd.  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514



Vol. XXVIII, No. 5

May 1999

### **Monthly Meeting**

**Monday, May 24, 1999, at 7 pm**

**Program** — *Australia*, presented by **Barbara Roth**

**Location** — **Binkley Baptist Church**, the Lounge.  
Binkley is on Willow Drive at 15-501 in Chapel Hill,  
near University Mall.

### **March Meeting**

by *Ginger Travis*

Our speaker will be Barbara Roth, showing slides and talking about the birds and habitats of Australia. This is our last meeting before the summer break, so come enjoy an interesting talk, cast your ballot for next year's officers, and enjoy the fellowship of other birders.

The first fall meeting will be on September 27, and the speaker then will be Mike Tove, on identifying hawks.

### **Elections will be held at May 24 meeting**

Maury Graves, on behalf of the injured Harriet Sato (the CHBC Nominating Committee), presented the following slate of officers at the April meeting:

President — Magnus Persmark  
Vice-President (Chapel Hill) — Ginger Travis  
Vice-President (Durham) — vacant (we need you!)  
Secretary — Judy Murray  
Treasurer — Fran Hommersand

No other nominations were made at the meeting.

### **Participants Wanted for Orange County Mini-Breeding Bird Survey**

by *Ginger Travis*

In Orange County we're picking up on Haven Wiley's suggestion to do an annual mini-breeding bird survey in order to find out what we have in the entire county. In the future, when good data are needed on the county's breeding birds, we should be able to provide it. ("We" includes members of both New Hope Audubon and the Chapel Hill Bird Club.)

This survey will be modeled on the big national breeding-bird survey. That is, it will be done from the

roadside with stops every half mile to count all birds observed (seen and heard) in three minutes. The difference (the reason this one is "mini") is that the routes will be pretty short: 9.5 miles.

This is just the first year, so we'll be figuring out how to do this as we go. But we'd like to have more participants to get better coverage of the county.

For more information on what this survey is and how we plan to do it, go to <http://www.unc.edu/~rhwiley/mbbs>

At present we have twelve routes, and half of them are covered. We'll gladly add more routes for additional participants; that will give us better coverage of the county.

Please email or call me if you'd like to take part or have questions. Ginger Travis 919-942-7746 (home) [ginger\\_travis@unc.edu](mailto:ginger_travis@unc.edu)

### **Orange County Mini-Breeding Bird Surveys**

by *Haven Wiley* (<http://www.unc.edu/~rhwiley/mbbs>)

#### *Objective*

To collect information about the distribution of breeding birds in Orange County and any changes in their abundance from year to year.

#### *Basic Method*

Record all birds seen or heard from points one half mile apart along secondary roads; one or two people can count (others can drive or assist otherwise)

### **Membership Information**

Calendar-year (Jan.-Dec.) dues for most individuals and families are \$15; for students, \$10. If you wish to renew for more than one year, multiply the annual dues rate times the number of years. Please send your check (payable to the *Chapel Hill Bird Club*) to club treasurer Fran Hommersand, 304 Spruce Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. If you have questions, please call Fran at 967-1745.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Data Forms and list of Breeding Birds of Orange County (with four-letter codes) are on the web site.

Questions? Suggestions? Contact Haven Wiley for questions about procedures or Ginger Travis for questions about route assignments.

### *Basic Procedures*

1. pick a day for your count between May 15 and June 30; a Sunday morning is a good time because there is little traffic then
2. arrive at the starting point in time to start your first count exactly 30 minutes before sunrise
3. drive exactly 0.5 miles between counts by the odometer in your car
4. if it is unsafe to stop at the 0.5-mile mark (or the 0.5-mile mark falls on a numbered highway) continue to the first place on your route where it is safe to stop (for the next count, proceed 0.5 miles from this adjusted position)
5. continue until you have made 20 stops (9.5 miles if all intervals are 0.5 miles)

### *Making each roadside count*

1. get out of your car beside the road and get your data sheet ready
2. record how many individuals of each species you see or hear within exactly 3.0 minutes from the time you are ready to start
3. do not count any birds heard or seen more than 0.25 miles away
4. also record the general kind of habitat on each side of the road
5. see the sample data sheets (see the links on the web page).

### *Hints*

- \* The first time you run a route, it will take some extra time to learn the turns and stopping places.
- \* A good county map with the names of secondary roads is essential.
- \* Your first few roadside counts will also need some getting used to. But it shouldn't be long before you have established a routine.
- \* Like the national BBS, the results will be most useful when the same people do the same routes year after year.
- \* The longer we can keep doing these MBBS routes the more interesting they will become!

### *Random Routes*

To provide an unbiased record of bird populations, routes for MBBS are selected randomly within some limits. Technically, they are a stratified random sample. The County was divided into sixths, and a random point was selected in each sixth.

A route was then identified that fit these criteria:

1. the route must stay on secondary roads (neither NC nor US routes) as much as possible
2. it must pass through the random point (or as close to it as possible)
3. it must maintain a NE-SW or NW-SE alignment (chosen randomly) as far as possible

Some routes pass through suburban or urban areas — it is important to survey these habitats too!

See <http://www.unc.edu/~rhwiley/mbbs> for routes.

### **Woodpecker Ridge at Falls Lake**

*by Brian Bockhahn, Park Ranger at Falls Lake*

Some of you have asked me to share the location of my favorite birding spot here at Falls Lake. It is a tract of State Park Land that was being managed for Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat, without any luck. There have been many controlled burns and clearings and cuttings done in this area, which has produced some excellent forest type edge habitats.

It is called Woodpecker Ridge and is located north of the Highway 50 bridge, on the west side of the road. It runs from the bridge at Hwy 50 all the way to Sandling Beach Recreation Area. There are only two or three good places to park on the road shoulder, the best being directly across from the entrance to Highway 50 Boat Ramps. There is a sign and a small trail. There is a network of fire roads and fire lines, so there is plenty of walking, some of the best habitat is located in the southern end near some fields and scrub brush.

Please tread lightly and be careful not to disturb any nesting birds. This area is not maintained for public use, but we do allow people to walk there, it is a privilege not to be abused. And don't get mad if a Park Ranger stops to see what you're doing, hey it might be me looking for neotropical migrants!!!

Mark Johns and some bird clubs lead hikes out there occasionally. If I'm not too busy I'd be glad to hike out there. If anybody wants more info or finds some rare birds out there, please let me know. Happy Birding! You can contact me at (919)676-1027 or [fallslak@bellsouth.net](mailto:fallslak@bellsouth.net)

### **Good Use For Cigarette Filters**

*by Paul Shewmaker, Simpsonville, SC*

I don't have much patience for smokers who are usually trashy in their habits. However, cigarette filters do have an alternative use. Yesterday at work I checked out a House Finch nest close to the smokers' patio. The body of the nest was constructed out of natural materials, but the lining was 100% shredded filters. I guess these finches didn't heed the Surgeon General's warning about the effects of smoking on the fetus!

## Number 100 Is Best Yard Bird Ever!

by Gail and Herman Lankford, Raleigh

Mother Nature smiled upon us on 9 May. We went to Mason Farm in the morning and got good looks at Chat and Summer Tanager and finally a Pewee for this spring, but nothing exciting. Came home and at 3:00 sat down at table to start doing paperwork. Scanned yard for activity and found odd sparrow. Watched it for 45 minutes with binocs and then scopes from inside and outside, and consulted 6 field guides to be certain we had a beautiful Lincoln Sparrow. Our 100th yard bird, our 50th spring 1999 yard bird, and a state bird. We called a few people to share this find, but only Clyde Smith came over to add it to his state list. The bird remained until 8:00; after that it was too dark to see. Did not see it this morning before leaving for work. We had previously seen this species in Erie, PA, Neal's Lodge, TX, and west coast of Newfoundland. Last sighting 1994. I guess this will rank as our best yard bird ever.

## Catbirds in Tandem With Towhees

by Chris Canfield, Chapel Hill, May 12

My catbirds are working in tandem with a new brother/sister pair of Eastern Towhees. The catbirds peck away at the suet on the tree. Crumbs and bits fall to the base of the tree where a father towhee has brought his daughter and son to feed on the remnants. All of this happens within six feet of my office window.

It is a great chance to study the differences in coloration between the young male and female. Female is pretty much brown mottled with white throughout. The male has distinct black feathers mixed in on the head, throat, tail and flight feathers. Haven't seen mother Towhee escorting them ever, although an adult female has been spotted nearby (perhaps unrelated).

## Sightings

### Late Ducks at Old Hope Valley Farm Rd - 4/16

by Sandy Cash

Old Hope Valley Farm Road was, on the whole, fairly quiet during the hour or so I was there. Heard and saw a singing Field Sparrow, heard another singing from some distance away. Heard an Ovenbird and Pine Warbler (surprise).

Then, while walking out along the old railroad bed at the end of the power line cut, I looked up to the North and saw two immature Bald Eagles in what almost seemed like a courtship display... I have absolutely no idea what a Bald Eagle courtship display actually looks like, but the two birds were sort of, well, cavorting, sometimes flopping on their backs in

midair a la Harriers (or so it seemed). Whatever it was they were doing, they were beautiful.

The surprise of the day, however, came when I reached the end of the railroad bed. There, swimming contentedly at my feet, was a lone drake **Red-head** - so close I could clearly make out almost every detail with my bare eyes. He swam unhurriedly to the North, and in the distance I espied a lone drake Ring-necked Duck - neither bird would I have expected there at this time of year - am I wrong to be surprised? On my way out, I was treated to a serenade by a simply *gorgeous* male Prairie Warbler — a very nice way to cap off lunch!

## Brewster's Warbler in Duke Forest

by Kent Fiala

On May 2 I found a Brewster's Warbler in the Hollow Rock area of Duke Forest, while participating in the Chapel Hill spring count. I was hoping to be lucky and actually see a Kentucky Warbler that was singing from some thick undergrowth when I was distracted by a flash of bright yellow from a different direction. An instant glimpse through the leaves showed a yellow head with a black line through the eye, and another glimpse showed blue-gray wings with white wing bars — Blue-winged Warbler, even better than Kentucky. It wasn't exactly Blue-wing habitat, but then it is migration after all. A few seconds later, further away but in plain view I saw what I momentarily thought was the same Blue-wing — except it had no yellow anywhere other than the crown — Brewster's Warbler. Not exactly a lifer, but the first I've ever seen. It looked like a second generation backcross as illustrated in Dunn and Garrett; underparts clear white, Blue-wing type eyeline and yellow crown, gray upperparts, two wingbars. It didn't really look like there was yellow in the wingbars, but it was a little distant to be positive on that. Never did see that Kentucky.

## Common Ground-Dove at Falls Lake

by Will Cook

While browsing the NC state parks bird checklist web site (under development) I learned that Tom Howard found a Common Ground-Dove at Falls Lake State Recreation Area (Wake County) on May 3, right outside his office window! Unfortunately it has not been relocated. This is a first record for Falls Lake. The only other local record I know of was at Jordan Lake on 10/27/79, seen by Bob Lewis, Bob Hader, Ken Knapp, and Allen Bryan. Here are the details from Tom:

"Seen at 10:30 am on 3 May 1999 on gravel road behind Yorkshire Center. Bird was seen walking/feeding at close range <15 ft. Field marks noted: small size, about half the size of mourning dove, pink base

of bill, scaling on side of breast, short rounded tail and rufous wing flash when flushed. Nodding of head also noticed. That day the winds were calm and followed at least three consecutive days of steady, strong (20 - gusting to 30 mph) winds blowing from the northeast." — Tom Howard

Source:

<http://www.ncsparks.net/fauna&flora/birds/bird.html>

## Veery Special

by Betty King, 12 May

I have had a Veery singing and calling in my woods around my house in Chapel Hill for the last four days. Pretty special!

## Bank Swallows galore!

by Will Cook

Saturday May 15 I did a birdathon along with Bobbie Collins-Perry and David and Judy Smith (for part of the day). We managed to find 96 species. Among the surprises: more Bank Swallows than I've ever seen before. There were a dozen at Harris Lake and perhaps 40 at Jordan Lake. We saw lots of them at Ebenezer Point, at the Poplar Point settling ponds, Crosswinds Marina, and Farrington Point. They seemed to be everywhere! We also got all the other swallow species.

Other good birds: 2 very late Ring-necked Ducks at Harris Lake, 2 Ruddy Ducks at Harris Lake, 2 Great Egrets flying past Ebenezer. At Crosswinds, the gulls were all lined up on the breakwater and amongst the Ring-billed Gulls we found 3 immature Herring Gulls, 2 imm. Bonaparte's Gulls, and 2 Caspian Terns.

Conspicuous misses: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, N. Bobwhite, nightjars and owls (started too late), Red-headed Woodpecker, Kentucky Warbler (we went to Mason Farm when nothing was singing), Song Sparrow, E. Meadowlark.

## ... And Chucks

by Steve Shultz

Got a bit of birding in over the weekend between yard work, automobile maintenance and a sister-in-law's graduation. I finally got my lifer Bank Swallows at the NCSU dairy pond off Lake Wheeler Road. This species has eluded me for some time so I was glad to tick it off the list. The Banks were feeding over the pond as late as yesterday afternoon when they were joined by a few Tree swallows and the resident Barn Swallows. A few shorebirds are lingering around the edges of the pond. Present were Least Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, and Spotted Sandpiper.

The Chucks I previously reported on were going strong over the weekend. I got the opportunity to see

2 perched birds and 4-5 fly-by's. One bird flew in and landed surreptitiously by the car, giving us a start as we were preparing to leave. I answered some of my own questions regarding the more unusual sounds made by the birds. The thumping sound appears to occur just after the birds take flight, so I surmise it has something to do with wingbeats. The froggy sounds are made by the birds as they fly from spot to spot. The Chucks were joined by a Whip or two that seemed to try and compete (unsuccessfully) with the chorus of "Kiss William's widow" calls resounding from the woods. If anyone wants to see these birds, they are located at the end of West Lake Road in southern Wake County. I have specifically not used tape recordings or flashlights so as not to disturb the presumably nesting birds (plus you don't need them!).

## Wintering Hummers in Carteret County, NC

by John Fussell, Morehead City

On 8 April, I went over the long table I've been compiling of hummers reported to me in Carteret County this winter (after I wrote a newspaper solicitation for reports).

Although coming up with an exact number is difficult because of some reports from the same neighborhoods and thus some probable duplication, I think that I can say conservatively that the reports represent at least 50-60 hummers.

Most reports came from the Morehead City-Beaufort-Pine Knoll Shores area, although that probably represents to a large extent the coverage of the newspaper I wrote to. I should have written to other papers to get more reports from the western end of the county—Emerald Isle/Cape Carteret.

I only saw a fraction of the birds, but apparently the great majority were Ruby-throated/*Archilochus*. I did see one female/immature male *Selasphorus* at Newport, assumed to have been a Rufous.

Of the 8 immature or adult male *Archilochus* seen by myself or others, all were Ruby-throateds.

It is apparent that the great majority of wintering hummers in this county are Ruby-throateds. It seems to be the case that this is also true for the Dare County area.

Just down the coast from here, in Pender and New Hanover counties, the ratio of *Selasphorus* hummers to Ruby-throateds is obviously higher than in Carteret and Dare counties.

## Club officers

President: Monica Nees (968-8549)

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<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/chbc.html>