



The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – April 2012

Cashiers – Franklin – Highlands – Scaly Mountain

www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org

The mission of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society is to provide opportunities to enjoy and learn about birds and other wildlife and to promote conservation and restoration of the habitats that support them.

Message from the President: A Big Year!

The 2012 HPAS program series began recently with a showing of the film *The Big Year* at the Hudson Library in Highlands. As most of you probably know, the film and book story line revolves around three men rushing around to set the record for the largest numbers of birds seen in the U.S. in one year.

HPAS is setting out on a ‘Big Year’ of a different sort, but one not without excitement and energy. The Outings Committee and the Board of Directors has chosen to offer regular, weekly summertime bird outings this year for the first time in HPAS memory. These will take place every Saturday at the same time (unless posted otherwise) for the entire warm-weather birding season. We hope that the regularity of the outings will encourage increased participation by Audubon members and within the community in general.

The expanded outing schedule will hopefully encourage persons who are just becoming interested in birding to participate, and also those persons who have the knowledge, experience, and skill to share their birding observations with others. All of this implies that many more of us will necessarily be required to lead or co-lead trips than has been the case in the past. Scheduling trips, destinations, and leaders is no small challenge, to say nothing of getting out the publicity for all of these outings.

In addition to increased scheduled outings, HPAS is also conducting more frequent programs with local school groups, and a host of additional programs, social and networking activities. There are multiple opportunities to participate at all experience levels.

This really is a ‘Big Year’ for HPAS activities. Your participation is the ultimate gauge of how successful our year will be. Please join in!

CHICKS: It’s All Gone to the Birds

The Bascom is presenting a bird-themed exhibit in partnership with the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society and the Highlands Biological Station. Audubon North Carolina is a sponsor of the exhibit.

Until June 17, the Bunzl Gallery at The Bascom will be filled with a plethora of art works that portray an avian theme. Despite the focus on a single theme, the exhibition offers rich variety. Artists pursue the topic through a range of approaches and media. This exhibition, devoted to our feathered friends, provides a broad look into the world of contemporary and traditional art, letting divergent approaches take wing. From the traditional to the way out and wacky, visitors will experience a flight of fancy. During the exhibit period, HPAS will provide docents, a program by Mark Hopey on June 1, and Saturday field trips each week departing from The Bascom. Audubon NC’s Curtis Smalling will present a program and lead a field trip on May 12.

Among the activities planned at The Bascom are the following programs. As more details become available they will be posted at www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org and www.thebascom.org.

Saturday, May 12, 4:00 p.m.: Curtis Smalling, Audubon NC Important Bird Area Coordinator and Mountain Program Manager, "The Birds of the Highlands Plateau: Amazing Stories from a Remarkable Place."

Friday, June 1, 7:30 p.m.: Mark E. Hopey, Southern Appalachian Raptor Research, "Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS): Connecting birds and their habitat with people." This is a local bird monitoring project involving citizen participation that examines relationships between reproductive success, adult survivorship and the value of early successional habitat to birds on a regional scale. Refreshments will precede the program at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 9, 4:00 p.m.: Lloyd Newberry, conservator, "The Early Birders - Antique Nature Prints and Decoys."

Saturday, June 16, 4:00 p.m.: John Yow, author of *The Armchair Birder* and the just released *The Armchair Birder Goes Coastal*.

April Field Trip to Huntington Beach State Park April 23 and 24

There is still time to sign up for our trip to South Carolina. If you are planning to go, call or email Brock Hutchins (770-486-3715) with your travel schedule so plans can be made to accommodate you. We are looking forward to having a great time birding on the coast.

Field Trip Committee Announces Busy May Schedule

As our Board decided last Autumn to offer weekly Saturday bird walks/field trips for this season, your committee has been busy planning a full schedule of diverse and fun opportunities for birders of all levels to participate this year. The first Saturday of every month will be especially geared to "beginners", with guidance offered in the use of binoculars and field guides and an introduction to some of our more common species in relatively easily accessible places around the Highlands-Cashiers plateau. Of course, birders of all levels are welcome on all field trips.

In conjunction with the exhibit being offered by The Bascom from March 31 to June 17, "Chicks: It's All Gone to the Birds!" HPAS will have a uniquely packed May/June schedule of walks and programs you won't want to miss!

****MAY: All walks during the month of MAY will meet at The Bascom at 7:30 a.m.****

May 5, the very first walk of the year, will meet at The Bascom parking lot in Highlands, and will be led by our HPAS President, Russ Regnery, with assistance from Pat Strickland and others. Binoculars will be available for those who don't have them, and there will be field guides for reference. After the walk, anticipated to last for about 3 hours, The Bascom will offer a special, guided gallery tour for participants, which will enhance enjoyment of their exciting exhibit, "Chicks: It's all Gone to the Birds!" As always, entrance to The Bascom is free to all.

May 8, Tuesday is a special outing to the Southern Highlands Reserve. It offers some of the most beautiful spring blooms, our native azaleas, as well as a nice selection of newly arrived migrants, such as the wood warblers, true gems of our summer mountains. Be sure to bring your cameras, as the scenery is awesome, and meet at The Bascom for car-pooling at 7:30 a.m.. Those joining this outing from Cashiers should meet at 7:45 in the area behind Wendy's/Community Center, where those from Highlands will meet up with them at 8:00 a.m., to continue car-pooling to the Reserve, which is in the Lake Toxaway area. Wear stout walking shoes, and bring water and binoculars. This walk will be led by Romney Bathurst with Ann Campbell and others assisting.

Access to the Reserve is for groups, by reservation only, so this is an opportunity you won't want to miss! Call Romney at 526-1939 or Ann Campbell at 743-9942 with questions and to sign up for this very special outing.

Our May 12 walk will be at Lonesome Valley, in Cashiers, and will feature Curtis Smalling, Audubon NC Important Bird Areas Coordinator and Mountain Program Manager, with Romney Bathurst and Michelle Styring assisting. Curtis is an excellent leader, full of fascinating and fun information about our mountain birds, as those who have been fortunate to be on one of his walks will know. Be sure to join us, bring cameras, water and binoculars, and be prepared for some moderate uphill walking. As birders, however, we are always stopping to watch and observe, so the pace will be slow and enjoyable. Those from Highlands will meet, as usual in May, at The Bascom, and will carpool directly to Lonesome Valley. For those from Cashiers, please meet us at Lonesome Valley at 8:00 a.m. sharp, carpooling with others, if at all possible, is recommended, as parking is somewhat limited. This is a beautiful property which is being sensitively developed, and while access is strictly private, the owners and residents are anxious to share their special canyon on this occasion. Birds such as Black-throated Blue, Black-and-White, Hooded, and Blackburnian Warblers are usually seen, along with Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Ovenbird, Pileated Woodpecker and sometimes Scarlet Tanagers. Call Romney with questions, phone numbers as above. Curtis will speak at The Bascom at 4:00 p.m.

May 19 will be another unique field trip, as it will be a joint outing to an area of special conservation interest with the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust. As lunch is furnished, there will be a \$5 charge for Land Trust members (and this will be the *only* walk of the year which is not free). Those who are not Land Trust members are encouraged to join - at a modest \$35 per year, your support of their mission to conserve our precious mountain habitats is invaluable. The walk will be led by Gary Wein of HCLT, with Russ Regnery and Avary Doubleday assisting with the birds. Bring your binoculars, a drink, and cameras too. Spring migrants will again be featured, as well as wildflowers. Please call 526-1111 to reserve your spot on this special walk with HCLT.

On May 26 Brock Hutchins will lead a walk, assisted by Edwin Poole. They will help you find some of the denizens of Turtle Pond Road, just west of Highlands. This will be roadside birding, so easy walking, but do meet at The Bascom at 7:30 a.m. for car-pooling. The gorgeous Canada Warbler is generally found nesting in the rhodo thickets along this road. Other birds which might be seen include Eastern Bluebird, N. Mockingbird (unusual in our mountain area), Veery, and Gray Catbird. As always, we will be on the lookout for raptors as well. Please call Brock Hutchins, 787-1387, for questions.

All walks, with the exception of May 19, are free and open to the public. Be sure to bring along a friend and help them get to know more about the wonders of our mountain birds and their habitats.

***Rain policy: If there is moderate to heavy rain at 7:30 and if it isn't forecast to end shortly, the walks will be cancelled. If in doubt, please call the walk leader at the number listed. If it is just sprinkling and if the forecast doesn't call for any worse than that, the walks will meet as scheduled, just be sure to bring an umbrella/rain gear. Birds actually become more active following a rain! PLEASE refer to our web site, www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org for the most up to date information on all walks & programs.

Field Trip Committee Preview of June Schedule

While more complete information will be available in the next newsletter and on our website regarding June walks, here's a brief sneak preview!

June 2 – a Beginners' field trip to observe and assist with bird-banding at Tessentee Farms, Otto. Mark Hopey, naturalist in charge of the project, will speak the night before, June 1, at The Bascom. The outing on the following morning will be a great follow-up to Mark's talk, and will offer a special chance to see birds in the hand, up close and personal – you won't want to miss it! (You don't have to attend the talk to enjoy the field trip!)

Announcement of Annual Membership Meeting June 11

The Annual Membership Meeting will be held at 7:15 p.m., June 11, at the Highlands Rec Park. The principal business of the meeting will be the election of Director for the class of 2015. The slate of nominees will be posted at www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org after approval by the Board of Directors. If you have suggestions for nomination, please contact Russ Regnery. The meeting will be preceded by a pot luck supper and followed by a program presented by Curtis Smalling, Audubon NC Mountain Manager and IBA Coordinator.

Dues Are Due

Dues for the 2012 year are now due. As you may know, we have a new Membership Chairman, Pat Strickland, and she would very much appreciate it, if you would complete the renewal form we have included at the bottom of this page (it can be used for new members also) and submit it with your check. This way, Pat can verify that all the information we have on you is current. If you have any questions, concerning your membership, please contact her at her home number: 743-7421.

Chapter Membership

In September of 2010 the HPAS membership consisted of 117 individuals and 3 corporate members. By the same period in 2011 the membership had grown to 135 individuals and 4 corporate members. Increasing our membership numbers affords us more funds and the ability to provide more services to our members. We welcome all our new members and look forward to getting to know you better in the coming years.

Annual membership in Highlands Plateau Audubon Society runs from May 1 through April 30. Several of you have already renewed or joined for the 2012/13 year. Thank you for your early support. If anyone else would like to renew a little early – or join for the first time – please complete and return the form below with your check to:

HPAS, P.O. BOX 833, Highlands, NC 28741

_____ Individual \$15
_____ Family \$25
_____ *Friend \$100
_____ *Donor \$250
_____ *Patron \$500
_____ *Benefactor \$1000

_____ Please send my newsletter by email
to save expense and trees!

Name

Winter address, if different:

Summer Mailing Address

City/State/Zip

Telephone

Email

From: _____ To: _____

Months for this address

*Memberships at the levels of Friend and above include (unless you prefer not) our payment of your membership dues for the National Audubon Society, which helps protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats nationally and internationally, therefore increasing the impact your membership has on the environment. National membership includes six issues each year of Audubon magazine.

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Education News

Schools on the Highlands Plateau have been busy studying birds during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, Patrick Brannon of the Highlands Nature Center and HPAS Education Committee presented bird/owl programs to over 13 classes in the area.

Doris Mager presented her raptor program to K-6 grade students at the Blue Ridge School in Cashiers and it was enthusiastically received.

Andrea Chalker's K/1 class at The Highlands School is learning about birds, trees, and changing seasons. We received some lovely pictures and letters from the students.

Janis Brannon, middle school science coordinator at Summit Charter School, has studied birds and their habitats with her 6th graders. Each student will submit individual data from their own backyards to Treasure Highlands.

Marsha LaFontaine at Summit Charter School is teaching an extensive 6-week bird study with small groups of 3rd, 4th, & 5th grade students which include bird walks in several different habitats. HPAS provided volunteers for the 6 "swamp" walks at the Village Commons boardwalk. The data from this unit will also be submitted to Treasure Highlands.

Curtis Smalling of Audubon North Carolina will be instructing a Center for Life Enrichment class entitled "Common Birds of the Highlands Plateau" on June 11, 2012 from 9:30am-12:00noon at the Highlands Nature Center.

There will be many other "educational" opportunities this season with the Chicks exhibit at The Bascom, our monthly programs, and weekly bird walks. Happy Birding!

2012 Program Schedule Announced

The Program Committee has planned an expanded and varied schedule of programs for the season. All programs will begin with refreshments at 7:00 p.m. and take place at the Highlands Civic Center, except as noted below. Watch the web site for updates and possible additions!

May 12, Curtis Smalling, Audubon NC Mountain Program Manager, "Birds of the Highlands Plateau: Amazing Stories from a Remarkable Place," 4:00 p.m. at The Bascom, an Exhibit Presentation.

June 1, Mark Hohey, Southern Appalachian Raptor Research, "Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS): long-term results from banding studies, 7:30 p.m. at The Bascom, presented by HPAS. Light refreshments at 7:00 p.m.

For the month of June, HPAS will have a display at the Hudson Library in Highlands.

June 7, Owl Prowl, co-sponsored by Highlands Biological Station and HPAS, 7:00 p.m. at the Highlands Nature Center

June 11, Annual Membership Meeting, 7:15 p.m., preceded by a potluck supper at 6:00 p.m.; program at 7:30 p.m., program to be presented by Curtis Smalling, Audubon NC Mountain Manager and IBA Coordinator.

July 9, Dr. Douglas Pratt, NC Museum of Natural Sciences. “Birds of Hawaii: Evolutionary History and Current Status,” 7:00 p.m.

July 23, Romney Bathurst, 7:00 p.m., Subject announced later.

Aug. 27, Dr. Jeremy Hyman, Western Carolina University. “Aggression, Personality and Urbanization in Song Sparrows,” 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 10, Chapter Members Slide Show, “Wildlife and Special Places,” 7:00 p.m.

October, Mager (Eagle Lady) - Raptors, date and time to be announced.

Highlands Plateau Audubon Society Officers

President - Russ Regnery, 404-558-1085

Vice - President – Avary Doubleday, 526-8414

Secretary – Cathi Overton, 787-1387

Treasurer – Mike Kaiser, 526-5071

Directors and Committee Chairs

Communications – Avary Doubleday

Conservation – Russ Regnery

Education – Ann Campbell

Field Trips – Brock Hutchins

Finance – Mike Kaiser

Hospitality – Mary Lou Waas

Membership & Development – Pat Strickland

Nominating & Leadership Development - Open

Program – Don Shure

At Large – Romney Bathurst

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