



The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – August 2013

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.

President's Message

I recently participated in two different environmentally oriented events. I've been thinking about some of the contrasts between the two ever since.

The 30th annual Cullowhee Native Plant Conference (CNPC) featured two talks by Professor Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*, which of course was the first book to draw attention to the connection between native plants and native birds. Janisse Ray, the Southeastern poet and environmental writer, who has been compared to a modern era Rachael Carson of the SE, was another inspirational featured Cullowhee speaker. There was a talk and exhibit from the Xerxes Society, a group devoted to the preservation of native butterflies and plant pollinators. A young entrepreneurial scientist from South Carolina spoke about identifying and culturing wild fungi that are essential to much plant life, as well as the potential that such fungi might play in the future of horticulture/agriculture and biotechnology. There were perhaps 20 vendors offering native plants for sale that they themselves had propagated, including one rare plant that had been grown from seed commercially for the first time ever! There were old friends and new acquaintances from around the SE, and sooo much to learn. What a wonderful "circus"! It occurred to me that the attendees at this conference were just about as 'turned on' and dedicated to the preservation and propagation of native plants, and as environmentally oriented, as any group you might encounter.

The adults who traveled to the CNPC in Cullowhee (there were zero children evident at this event) were already personally 'invested' in native plants, either from a conservation, commercial horticultural, or scientific perspective, or perhaps simply motivated to benefit from a unique educational experience. Most of these people already were involved with 'hands on' native plant experiences. There were native plants for sale to take home and add to the diversity and interest of one's local vegetation. Perhaps the plant sale was also an appeal to well-cultivated consumer instincts. Most of the people at this conference seemed to already have a good idea of what they wanted to gain from the meeting and I'll wager they got more than for what they bargained. Everyone seemed to leave the CNPC with at least some new ideas of what they wanted to do with native plants.

The second event was the 10th annual Mountain Wildlife Days (MWD) at Sapphire Valley, which hosted an inspirational evening presentation by naturalist and photographer Bill Lea. There were subsequent daytime presentations by several other local environmentally aware presenters who introduced their audiences to various interesting animals. Most of the content of these 'critter-based' presentations appeared to be aimed at younger people. As in past years, HPAS had a well-staffed and organized display to try to interest attendees, and perhaps their parents and grandparents, in participating in HPAS activities. One contrast between the MWD and the CNPC was the lack of much obvious 'enthusiasm' conveyed by many of the adults attending MWD that might have hinted at possible future serious involvement. MWD succeeded as an important mechanism to help fund future youth environmental educational programs in our area. The presentations succeeded as entertainment. Did they succeed in engaging many adults in the audiences? Was this necessary?

Perhaps one third of the audiences at the daytime MWD critter events were under the age of 12. Their youthful expressions of excitement suggested that they enjoyed the animals (e.g., various snakes, peregrine falcons, a wallaby, and a 97% gray wolf). The larger number of adults listened attentively and asked good, easy to answer

questions. Of course the young people had a boundless supply of questions (e.g., “does the wolf howl?”). I would bet that few among these MWD audiences already had the benefit of on-going personal wildlife activities. Likewise, it is hard to imagine MWD people (young or not) leaving the event realistically looking forward to engaging in routine personal interactions with the more spectacular or exotic animal species. There was seemingly little guidance from the various speakers for how the audience could become environmentally involved on a personal level, beyond encouraging them to explore nature on their own. Hopefully, some of the positive animal ‘lessons’ learned will be applied to future youthful interactions with such things as native amphibians, reptiles, and perhaps even black bears. What will be the long-term impact on environmental awareness? Will some of these young people influence their parents to become more involved? Hopefully the MWD investment in youth will pay long-term, but hard to measure, dividends. MWD was rich in potentially impressionable young people.

Are there lessons to be learned for HPAS? Are there answers to some of my questions?

The CNPC reaffirmed my conviction that intellectually stimulating programs are an important component for challenging adult imaginations and for building meaningful environmental awareness. The MWD reminded me of the importance of involving children when we can and hopefully doing so in a manner where there is some chance of meaningful follow-up so the experiences become ‘useful’ in the context of the life of the child. The concept of helping to provide guidance/tools for youth or adults for what can be done *after* a formal program is over is an element of environmental education that I frequently overlook. Gardening has an obvious advantage in terms of necessary follow-up; e.g., successfully cultivating a new native plant is a significant part of the process. Are there any valid Audubon analogies that can be drawn with nurturing valued plants? Should providing better bird habitat be more of a central pillar of our HPAS activities? How can HPAS better promote open-ended, self-motivated, bird and bird habitat-oriented activities? The success of our HPAS weekly birding outings is clearly a step in the direction towards reinforcing what many of us can learn over time. How can we better challenge ourselves to enrich our birding experiences on our own, or as part of a family, class, or community? Within the context of enhancing our local native birds and bird habitat, do we each personally have good ideas for what we want to do next?

The HPAS Board will meet in October for a planning session. Your thoughts on these questions could help us refine our plans. Let us hear from you!

- Russ Regnery

Avian Perspectives Exhibition Opens August 3

The Highlands Plateau Audubon Society and the Hudson Library will present the exhibition, “Avian Perspectives” during the month of August. The event is a bird art exhibit consisting of paintings by John Sill, carvings by Joe Riva, and photography by Ed Boos. All three are members of HPAS. More information about the artists and their work can be found on our web site, www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org.

The exhibition will open on Saturday, August 3 and run through the month of August at the Hudson Library located at 554 Main Street in Highlands. A reception will be held at the library on Tuesday, August 20 at 4:00 pm where the three artists will speak about their work.

Annual Picnic, Sunday August 11

Please join us on Sunday, August 11 at 5:00 PM for your chapter’s Annual Picnic, which will be held at the Highlands Civic Center picnic shelter. Barbecue and soft drinks will be provided. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. There is a \$5.00 fee per person. For reservations contact Dee Andry at 787-1586, so we will know how many to provide for.

Upcoming Programs

All speaker programs will begin at 7:00 pm for refreshments and 7:30 pm for the presentation.

Monday, August 5: Dr. Roarke Donnelly, faculty member in Biology and Division Chair at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta. will present his recent findings from four years of research in Montana on the American Dipper, a small thrush-like songbird. This fascinating bird occupies stream bank habitats throughout our western states and Canada where it wades, dives, and swims underwater to feed on aquatic invertebrates, small fish, and fish eggs. Dr. Donnelly will discuss the implications of his work concerning the importance of American Dippers in the future of fishery restoration in the west. Join us at the Highlands Civic Center to learn more about the unique songbird that took a path untraveled during its evolutionary development.

Sunday, August 11: Annual Picnic at the Civic Center – see page 2 for details.

Monday, August 19: The film “Birders: The Central Park Effect” will be presented at the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library in Cashiers at 7:00 pm. This is a delightful film about the seasonal changes in birds and birders in one of our most famous parks in the U.S. There is an extraordinary array of beautiful birds that drop into this island habitat of Central Park every spring and fall during migration. Included in the film are equally colorful New Yorkers who set their schedules around their birding passion. This film will warm your heart and bring a smile to your face for the entire 60-minute viewing. It was especially well received by the audience when shown in Highlands on July 8.

Monday, September 16: Paige Barlow, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Georgia will discuss “Human Land Use and Avian Conservation in Changing Landscapes of Southwestern NC” at the Hudson Library in Highlands. Paige has spent the past several years determining the composition, density and diversity of bird species occupying a wide array of natural and human-impacted habitats throughout Macon County. Her goal has been to determine the impact of various land management practices on avian populations occupying the landscape mosaic within our region. Paige has been using several fascinating approaches to assess the patterns emerging from her work. Her findings should prove invaluable to local and regional landowners in making sound land management decisions in the future.

Monday, September 30: Local Chapter members Ed and Cindy Boos return for a second performance with their striking photographic images and video interpretation of bird behavior in colony-nesting wading birds and several iconic birds of prey. Ed and Cindy have spent countless hours “working” primarily in Florida over the past year to attain a large series of beautiful images for our enjoyment. Their photos will be accompanied by numerous entertaining stories that will enable the images to come alive during their presentation. Join us at the Hudson Library in Highlands for this highly entertaining presentation that promises to wow the audience.

Field Trips

Field trips are subject to change so check local newspapers or www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org for updates and changes. If you have questions, call Brock Hutchins at 828-787-1387.

August

August 3: Russ Regnery will lead a field trip around Highlands for beginning bird watchers. Meet at the Highlands Town Hall parking area at 7:30 AM to car pool. Extra binoculars will be provided if you don't have any. Russ will emphasize basic birding skills beginners can use to find and identify birds.

August 10: Kyle Purcell will lead a trip to Sunset Rocks and the Highlands Nature Center to find resident birds common to this area. This is the beginning of fall migration for birds, so migrants not common to this area may also be seen. Meet at the Highlands Town Hall parking area at 7:30 AM.

August 17: Brock Hutchins will lead a trip to Scaly Mountain and Sky Valley locations to look for local breeding birds and early fall migrants. Meet at the Highlands Town Hall parking area at 7:30 AM to car pool.

August 24: Brock Hutchins will lead a trip to Fairfield Lake in Sapphire Valley Resort. This trip is provided courtesy of Ann Campbell who lives on the private lake. The trip requires a two mile walk around the lake, so bring appropriate foot wear and clothing. We should see several kinds of warblers, herons and possibly waterfowl. Meet at 7:30 AM at the new Cashiers Community Center to car pool to the lake.

August 31: Russ Regnery is our leader for a trip to the Franklin Greenway in Franklin. We will meet up with birders from the Franklin Bird Club for a joint field trip. Meet at the Highlands Town Hall parking area at 7:30 AM to car pool to Franklin.

September

September 7: Romney Bathurst will lead a field trip around Highlands for beginning bird watchers. Meet at the Highlands Town Hall parking area at 7:30 AM to car pool. Extra binoculars will be provided if you don't have any. Romney will emphasize basic birding skills beginners can use to find and identify birds.

September 14: On this trip we will go to the Blue Ridge Parkway to look for migrating warblers, vireos and thrushes. The trip is made in memory of Charlie Davis who was a long time member and supporter of Audubon and a man who loved the mountains and the Blue Ridge Parkway. We will leave earlier than usual at 7:00 AM from the Highlands Town Hall parking area. Please pack a light lunch for we will not return until mid afternoon. The Parkway always provides spectacular views along with interesting birds. Please contact Brock Hutchins at 828-787-1387 if you want to go.

September 21: This will be our rain day for the Blue Ridge Parkway if the September 14 trip is cancelled. Remember, if we are going to the Parkway today, meet at 7:00 AM. Otherwise, we will visit some birding hotspots around Highlands. Meet at the Highlands Town Hall parking area at 7:30 AM if we are staying in Highlands today. The leader for this trip will be Brock Hutchins.

September 25 & 26: We hope to do some local birding with members of the Fripp Island Audubon Club (SC), who will be visiting our area. If you would like to join us, please call Romney Bathurst at 526-1939.

Possible Hawk Watch: Whiteside Mountain can be quite busy in late September, IF the weather conditions are right for raptor migration. If you would like to be notified when we are headed up the mountain, please call Romney Bathurst (526-1939) or Brock Hutchins (787-1387). Of necessity, this will likely be at the last minute, as we depend on weather reports as well as reports from the Eastern area of the state where more formal hawk watches take place.

December

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count in Highlands will begin at 7:30 AM on a date and at a location to be announced later. Please contact Brock Hutchins at 828-787-1387 if you want to participate.

A word about rain!

If rain is pouring down with no promise of improvement, the trip/walk will be cancelled. If it's just "misting" and conditions are due to get better, the trips will meet as planned, bring rain gear, umbrellas and a good sense of humor! If you are uncertain, please call the number listed for the trip. Note also that schedule changes may occur. Check the web site for the latest information.

Audubon Participates in September Native Plant Symposium

The Highlands Biological Foundation's Native Plant Symposium on September 13 and 14 will feature programs by local and state Audubon Board members. On Friday afternoon, HPAS Board members Romney Bathurst and Brock Hutchins, will present "A Bird's Eye View with Highlands Audubon," visiting gardens that exemplify the qualities of bird-friendly habitat and sound ecological principles.

On Saturday morning, Kimberly Brand, Trustee, Audubon NC, and Vice President, Forsyth Audubon, will speak on "Bird-Friendly Landscaping: How You Can Help Birds." Selecting plants for your garden from the perspective of the needs of birds can both attract birds and help them throughout their annual cycle.

Registration Information for the Symposium is available at <http://highlandsbiological.org/nps/>.

National Audubon Society Convention

Audubon NC was well represented at the national convention by four staff members and eight chapter members. Two of Audubon North Carolina's own were presented with prestigious awards.

Lena Gallitano, avid volunteer and former board trustee for ANC, was presented with the Atlantic Flyway William Dutcher Award for outstanding volunteer service to Audubon in forwarding bird conservation.

And Walker Golder, Deputy Director and Director of Coast and Marshes, was awarded National Audubon Society's Callison award, the highest award possible for a staff member. Walker's lifelong dedication to bird conservation and the tremendous impact he has had on conservation issues across the eastern seaboard were noted in the presentation of the award.

More information about both awards is available at <http://nc.audubon.org/newsroom>.

Community Involvement

Even though HPAS continues to hold weekly bird walks and great evening programs we still find time to collaborate with other organizations in the area.

Ann Campbell participated with Blue Ridge School in Cashiers for a nature-themed week for their Summer Reading Enrichment Camp, June 17-20.

On July 19-20 Sapphire Valley held the 10th Annual Mountain Days with over 500 people attending. Romney led a bird walk in Cashiers to kick off the Saturday event. Our president, Russ Regnery, was the M.C. for the Friday evening event as well as all day Saturday. All proceeds will benefit wildlife education.

On July 30, Russ Regnery and Glenda Zahner will present a program on Birds and Their Habitats to the Jackson Swain Master Gardeners at the Jackson County Public Library in Sylva.

On September 13 HPAS will sponsor a birding field trip for the Highlands Biological Foundation's Native Plant Symposium with special emphasis on bird-friendly habitat. Kimberly Brand Audubon NC Trustee will be speaking at the Symposium on "Bird-Friendly Landscaping: How You Can Help Birds".

Check out our web site under community involvement for information and photos.

Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

Officers

President -- Russ Regnery, 404-558-1085

Vice - President – Avary Doubleday, 526-8414

Secretary – Michelle Ruigrok 526-2221

Treasurer – Mike Kaiser, 526-5071

Directors and Committee Chairs

Communications – Avary Doubleday

Conservation – Kyle Pursel

Education – Ann Campbell

Field Trips – Brock Hutchins

Finance – Mike Kaiser

Hospitality – Dee Andry

Membership & Development – Pat Strickland

Nominating & Leadership Development – Don Shure

Program – Don Shure

At Large – Romney Bathurst

George Kaye

Michelle Styring

Mary Lou Waas

Glenda Zahner

Newsletter Editor: John Gross

Web Master: Jean McCormick

Audubon NC Board, Chapter Liaison – Avary Doubleday



Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

P. O. Box 833

Highlands, NC 28741