



The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – June 2016

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.

From the President . . .

What Money Can't Buy

"...Only two things that money can't buy. And that's true love and homegrown tomatoes..." Guy Clark (1941-2016)

The recently departed troubadour Guy Clark penned and sang one of my favorite 'catch lines' within his song "Homegrown Tomatoes." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-QzLljL1u4>).

So it is with all due respect to Mr. Clark that it has occurred to me that, in my experience, there is one more thing that money can't buy that needs to be added to the list of true love and homegrown tomatoes. And that would relate to those persons who volunteer to work for worthy causes (without financial compensation of course).

Without volunteers there would be no 'grass roots' to most community organizations and, in the example of a local Audubon chapter, there would be no organization at all. Volunteers take turns in leadership roles and participating on committees to do what we can to try to make modest contributions to the quality of our community and environment. It is true that we pay our dues, however, those funds make projects, scholarships, etc., possible and don't return to our pockets. And it may also be true that in the absence of paid staff, volunteer organizations may have limits in terms of what can be accomplished on larger community levels (e.g., statewide), however, I am also frequently reminded that volunteerism at the local level is the purist form of community service.

I wish I had Guy Clark's talents and could compose and sing a song celebrating local volunteers (and of course include true love and homegrown tomatoes). Perhaps one of you will take this on as a challenge! I will gladly help sing the chorus.

HPAS has a healthy organizational structure that encourages turnover of leadership of directors and committee chairpersons after completion of several years of service. None of us is expected to, or tries to, 'do everything;' we each contribute parts to a larger whole. And none of us expects to be in a leadership role forever. The 'price we pay' for healthy leadership turnover is that the organization must routinely be reseeding new volunteer leaders, and encourage those persons who have stepped away from leadership for a period of time to consider returning to leadership roles. We must cultivate our own homegrown leadership (in addition to tomatoes and true love).

In my experience, HPAS directors and committees have a good time working together and occasionally we get to celebrate the results of worthy community projects, outreach, and alliances that we help sponsor. If you aren't already, please consider volunteering to the long-term viability of HPAS. Call me or talk to someone you may know on the board of directors.

Russell Regnery



Happenings Within the Nest Boxes

Quite a few of the participants in HPAS's second year nest box project have sent me comments and photos of what they are seeing and learning with the help of Traci Ballance, the Western Carolina University grad student who is doing her thesis in conjunction with our nest box project. I will let the photos speak for themselves. Enjoy!

Michelle Styring

Above left: After finding a nest in your box, the next excitement is finding eggs inside! Above right: Traci weighs the babies. She will do this every other day until she determines that fledging time is near, at which point she will advise that the box not be opened until all the babies have flown out.

HPAS member Audubon photographer winner

An HPAS member had one of his photos selected in this year's 2016 Audubon Photography Awards. More than 1,700 photographers participated submitting nearly 7,000 entries. Dick Dickson's photo of an Osprey won in the professional category.

Dick Dickson joined HPAS last year after meeting members at a Beer and Birds night. Since then, he has gotten involved in the Nest Box Project.

The photo was taken in Siesta Key, Sarasota, Florida. Dickson tells Audubon he has lived in Florida all his life and he enjoys watching the Ospreys around the bays.

Visit the site at: http://www.audubon.org/magazine/may-june-2016/the-2016-audubon-photography-awards-winners?utm_source=engagement&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2016-04-23_photoawardswinners



Osprey. Photo by Dick Dickson/Audubon Photography Awards

Birding the Bartram Trail

On May 5 fourteen birders, mostly members of HPAS and The Wilderness Society, hiked along the section of the Bartram Trail that goes through the Overflow Creek Wilderness Study Area. This watershed area forms one of the three chief tributaries that join to form the West Fork of the Chattooga River, a Wild and Scenic River. The vigorous hike began at the scenic overview on SR 106 near Scaly Mountain and proceeded down to Overflow Creek and back.

The outing was led by Brent Martin, Southern Appalachian Regional Director of the Wilderness Society.



Brent Martin leading the group.

Assisting was Peter McKinley, a bird biologist from Maine who is also a Climate Adaptation Ecologist for The Wilderness Society.

Few birds were seen owing to the cold, blustery conditions but many were heard and identified. Twenty-three species were thus recognized including the Red Breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Black and White Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo. The two most remarkable birds of the day were the Louisiana Waterthrush and Swainson's Warbler.

The hike was invigorating, the discussions informative and the company delightful.

2016 Membership Renewals Due

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their memberships so far this year! If you have not yet renewed, please take a moment to fill out a membership form (found at our website: www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org) and mail it to: HPAS, P.O. Box 833, Highlands, NC 28741. Your membership donation is needed to help support our local educational programs, birding field trips, newsletters, and local projects such as the growing citizen science cavity-nesting bird box project. Your donation is greatly appreciated and always put to good use to help our local chapter continue to thrive!

Franklin Bird Outings

Birding with the Franklin Bird Club on their regular Wednesday walks has been a big success. As many as 50 species have been seen in just a few hours, including species which don't often reach our altitude, such as the Yellow-breasted Chat, Fish Crow, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Blue Grosbeak, and others. Check the FBC website for details as the trips alternate between two starting points. It may seem like a long way to go, but it's a great group and lots of fun! Check out their Franklin Greenway and other walks at <https://franklinbirdclub.com/>

Romney Bathurst

Spring and Summer HPAS outings, activities & programs

Visit www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org or call 828- 526-1939

June 4— Birding at the Highlands Biological Station with WCU’s Dr. Barbara Ballentine Dr. Ballentine is an ornithologist and is heading the study of our nest box project this year, with an emphasis on Carolina Chickadees. Loaner binoculars will be available and beginners are welcome! Meet at K-H Founders Park in Highlands at 7:30 a.m.

June 6- HPAS Potluck Dinner at 6 p.m. at Highlands Civic Center, with a presentation called “Avian Communication” by Young Harris College’s Dr. Olga Melinkaya. We all appreciate birds’ vocalizations but auditory communication is just the beginning. Birds communicate in a variety of ways including visual signaling, body language and touch. Join us to learn about the multi-sensory world of avian communication.

June 9- “Owl Prowl” at 7:30 p.m. at the Highlands Nature Center. HPAS and Highland Biological Station will once again partner to present the annual Owl Prowl, complete with live owls presented by the Carolina Raptor Center in Charlotte. After the program, Audubon members and HBS staff will lead groups in town to look for owls. Be sure to bring a flashlight if you plan to join the hunt! Contributions to the Carolina Raptor Center are welcomed.

June 20 - At the Hudson Library at 7:30 p.m., Traci Ballance, an enthusiastic graduate student at WNC University, will speak on the HPAS nest box project. She is working with Professor Barbara Ballentine categorizing and organizing the results. Traci will provide a preliminary report and analysis of the results of the nest boxes installed with the leadership of Russ Regnery and Michelle Styring.

June 21 – Birds & Beer at the Ugly Dog in Cashiers Join HPAS for a spirited discussion of birds and birding starting at 5 p.m. and continuing with sandwiches and other pub grub.

June 24 – Stewartia and Birding Walk with Jack Johnston into Fires Creek (huge roadless area near Hayesville, beautiful watershed, and one of our top priority areas for wilderness designation in WNC). Trip is sponsored by the Wilderness Society. Join Jack Johnston for a special walk featuring both botanizing and birding. Jack is an expert on Stewartia and many other plants of our area, as well as an extraordinarily gifted birder. This outing will offer fine photographic opportunities and exploration of the Fires Creek Mountain Treasure Area near Hayesville, NC. Meet and depart from the Franklin K-Mart parking lot at 8 a.m. Footwear which you don’t mind getting wet is advised! Bring a packed lunch and a drink, if desired. There are also restaurants in Hayesville. Please notify Michelle Ruigrok if you plan to attend, at michelle_ruigrok@twsw.org.

July 2 - HPAS birding trip to the Cashier’s Village Green with President Russ Regnery. Meet at the parking lot for the new Community Rec Center behind the Library at 8 a.m. Loaner binoculars will be available. Little hiking required.

July 11 – “Birds of the Gods” film to be presented at 7:30 p.m. at Hudson Library following a mixer at 7. This PBS film features birds with elegant plumage, once considered descendants of birds from the Garden of Eden. Enter through back door.

July 15–July 16 - “Mountain Wildlife Days” at the Sapphire Valley ski slopes outside of Cashiers featuring a diverse mixture of adult and children programs. This event is designed to provide a unique experience for all ages. Live animals, exceptional commentary, music and outstanding photography all contribute to helping

develop a better appreciation and connection with nature and wildlife. All day each day.

July 19 – Birds and Beer (or wine or tea) at Satulah Mountain Brewing Company in Highlands. Spirited discussion of birds and birding starting at 5 p.m.

July 25 – A presentation on “Golden-winged Warblers of Costa Rica” by John Gerwin at 7:30 p.m. at Hudson Library following a mixer at 7 p.m. Please enter through back door. Learn about the winter habitat of this striking migrant that is now a rare sighting.

August 1 – “Animal Adventures along the Equator: From Africa to Ecuador” with Ed and Cindy Boos, still photographer and videographer extraordinaire. Presented at 7:30 p.m. at Hudson Library in Highlands following a mixer at 7 p.m. Please enter through the rear door.

August 6 – HPAS birding with Russ Regnery at the ranger’s station and beyond. Meet at 8 a.m. at the K-H Founders Park in Highlands. Some hiking involved. Loaner binoculars available.

August 7 - Annual HPAS summer picnic at the Recreation Center Pavilion in Highlands. Come at 6 p.m. with a covered dish: salad, vegetable or desert for 10 people. Meat will be provided. Set up at 5:00 p.m..

August 15 – The film “A Murder of Crows” will be presented at 7:30 p.m. at Hudson Library in Highlands following a mixer at 7:00 p.m. Please enter through the back door.

August 16 - Birds and Beer (or wine or tea) at the Ugly Dog in Highlands. Spirited discussion of birds and birding starting at 5 p.m. and continuing with sandwiches and other pub grub.

August 29 – “Turtle Conservation” presented by HPAS President Russ Regnery. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. at Hudson Library in Highlands following a mixer at 7:00 p.m. Please enter through the back door.

September 12 – A film entitled “Winged Migration” will be presented at 7:30 p.m. at the Hudson Library in Highlands with a mixer at 7 p.m. Enter through the back door.

September 17 - The annual Charlie Davis Memorial Blue Ridge Parkway Outing searching for migrating warblers, vireos, thrushes and raptors on the Blue Ridge Parkway. We leave at 7:00 a.m. from Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park in Highlands. Please pack a light lunch as we will stop at a scenic spot for a picnic and more birding before returning mid-afternoon. Bring water and your camera. The Parkway in autumn provides spectacular views and interesting birds even in less than perfect weather. Little hiking.

September 26 – Annual meeting at 7 p.m. at the Civic Center in Highlands, followed by a presentation on the Golden Eagle Project by Christine Kelly of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. <http://www.ncwildlife.org/>

Officers

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Secretary – Michelle Ruigrok, 919-621-0844
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Pat Strickland, Communications

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Michelle Styring, Nest Box Project

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