



# The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – April 2015

Cashiers – Franklin – Highlands – Scaly Mountain

[www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org](http://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 . . .*

## Thinking globally, acting locally and gearing up for nesters

A few days ago I received a “challenge” from the president of another Audubon chapter and the gist of the challenge was to suggest that our chapter contribute towards Golden Winged Warbler (GWWA) research and conservation. (His chapter has made a nice financial contribution to ongoing studies in Nicaragua.)

I was pleased to be able to report that HPAS has already been participating in coordinated GWWA studies through our support of Jamie Harrelson and her GWWA behavioral studies in our southern Appalachian region, as part of her Master’s program at Western Carolina University. I like to think this HPAS contribution falls under the rubric of ‘thinking globally and acting locally’ and that we are managing our modest funds in a sustainable and responsible manner. And I think we can all be proud to have contributed to furthering Jamie’s career in conservation biology. I know I am looking forward to hearing a presentation later this summer season from Jamie when she will summarize some of her findings.

It seems as if the seasons are really changing fast, or perhaps it is just that I have been on the move a lot recently! I hope all the migrating birds can correctly interpret the necessary environmental ‘clues’ as to when is the appropriate time to move north again. I have a hard time knowing what to wear from day to day when it goes from frozen to relatively hot (and back to cold again?) and from snow to rain!

Of course, many bird species are already on the move. Down along the coast some of the migratory shorebirds are already showing up again and some species will, of course, continue on their epic journeys to the tundra where they will nest. I am fascinated by the observation that many shorebird species find it worthwhile to migrate incredible distances just to find the right spot to nest successfully. And then I am reminded how difficult it is to find significant amounts of undisturbed shorebird nesting habitat anywhere south of the Arctic tundra.

I was recently in Wisconsin to help my brother with the annual sheep shearing on his farm. It was uncommonly warm for Wisconsin for this time of year (last year it was incredibly cold and almost snowbound) and while walking to the barn we saw a ‘first’ Robin of the season. I wondered what this lone Robin would do if it suddenly turned as cold as it was last year at this time? And I was reminded how many birds we take for granted that overwinter in the American South.

I know many of us are looking forward to keeping track of what species nest in the 100 bird boxes that HPAS helped to install last fall as part of our local project to determine whether providing both small and large nest box entrances makes a difference for cavity nesting birds in our area. Hopefully, this will be an ‘experiment’ from which we will gain useful information, not only about hole size preferences, but other nesting parameters as well. After we begin to document possible successes and failure, ideally we will be able to build on our experience for future seasons and begin to ‘fine tune’ how we can contribute to cavity nesting bird success in our area into the future.

So if you are already an ‘innkeeper’ for one of the 100 boxes, we look forward to hearing which species utilize your boxes. And if you would like to participate in this program in the future, please let us know...we already have more boxes ready to be set out sometime this season.

*Russ*

## Save the date: National Audubon Convention, July 10-13

Prepare to join Audubon's amazing network of dedicated chapter, centers, state and national leaders to celebrate One Audubon! The next biennial Audubon Convention will take place at the Lansdowne Resort on the banks of the Potomac River, near historic Leesburg, Va., on July 10-13. Enjoy four full days of exciting field trips, inspiring speakers, in-depth hands-on workshops and the camaraderie only Audubon can provide.

To receive email alerts when the Convention website launches and when registration opens in April, send an email to [convention@audubon.org](mailto:convention@audubon.org) titled "Convention Alerts" and include your email address, first and last name in the body of the message.

For general conference inquiries and questions or sponsorship opportunities contact Lynn Teneffoss at [lteneffoss@audubon.org](mailto:lteneffoss@audubon.org) or call 800-542-2748.

### Birds and Beer begins this month

Join us for a totally casual, drop-in get-together to talk birds, critters and lots of other things – no politics or religion, just good chats with birds as a focus. Have you seen something unusual at your feeder, wonder what's being seen elsewhere in the neighborhood, wondering what that strange critter was? Do you have some ideas on how we can improve our walks, or somewhere new we might go? Have you heard any owls lately? Let's have some fun and share some beer or wine or whatever appeals and have a nice bite to eat too, if time permits.



We will meet the third Tuesday of every month at least through September, beginning on April 21. We'll talk about spring migrants seen in Alabama and Kennesaw, Ga., and find out what's starting to show up here too! Starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Ugly Dog Pub in Highlands, BYO cash or credit card and designated driver.

May's get-together will begin at 5 p.m. May 19, for a bit of birding around town before adjourning to the Ugly Dog. Watch our website and the June newsletter for further gatherings. Be there or be square!

### NC Audubon Chapter Day at Haw River

Please Save the Date for Chapter Day at Haw River State Park on Saturday, August 1, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Registration information and an agenda will be available as we get closer to the date. Hope you can join Chapter members from around the state!

### Update to Kennesaw Trip, possible extension available

Thanks to the Franklin Bird Club, we have an additional opportunity in Kennesaw, Ga., on April 20, the day after the birding trip. Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS) is having a day trip to Smith-Gilbert Gardens in Kennesaw.

These are the gardens developed by Bob Gilbert with his partner Richard Smith for more than 35 years, and now belong to the City of Kennesaw. Now open to the public, they are 16 acres with more than 3,000 species of plants, several rare in American gardens, and many of them selected for their ability to attract birds. To learn more about the garden, visit [www.smithgilbertgardens.com/about-the-gardens/](http://www.smithgilbertgardens.com/about-the-gardens/)

This coincidence allows the opportunity to combine the two trips. The details about the Smith-Gilbert Gardens trip haven't been published yet, but if you're interested (and not on the SAPS mailing list) contact Romney Bathurst, and she'll forward when available.

When you sign up for the HPAS trip, let Romney know if you'll be staying for the garden tour. In that case, you will want to book your room at the Hampton Inn for April 18 and April 19.

## HPAS field trips

The Highlands Plateau Audubon Society (HPAS) will be hosting weekly bird spotting trips beginning the first Saturday in May continuing through June. Later field trips will be detailed later. HPAS provides binoculars, field guides and leaders to help find the common and uncommon species in our area.

These walks are free and open to the public. The first Saturday of each month will be geared for beginners, with help in using binoculars and field guides, as well as identifying some of our more common birds by sight and sound. Beginners' walks will start at 8:30 a.m. unless otherwise noted. Saturday walks will carpool from the parking area behind the Highlands Town Hall, near the public restrooms, unless otherwise noted.

Most walks will start at 7:30 a.m., but be sure to check if in doubt. Bring binoculars if you have them, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear if necessary.

Walks will be cancelled in the case of rain or heavy fog but a light drizzle is often ideal for birding. If the schedule should change due to unforeseen circumstances, the latest information will be posted on the HPAS web site: [www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org](http://www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org). For questions, call Romney Bathurst at 526-1939 or 828-200-0288. Walks for the remainder of the year will appear on the web site and in the June newsletter.

**April 18-19:** Kennesaw Mountain Trip, overnight at Hampton Inn, Kennesaw, Ga. Birding Sunday morning with a member from Atlanta Audubon, 7:30 a.m. at the park entrance. Call Romney to sign up.

**April 20:** Those wishing to stay another night may want to join the Franklin Bird Club at Smith-Gilbert Gardens, in Kennesaw, for birds and botany.

**April 21:** Birds & Beer, Ugly Dog Pub, 5:30 p.m. Join us for some fun chats about birds, critters, and our beautiful mountains. You may even decide to stay for one of the Ugly Dog's light suppers! BYO payment and designated driver.

**April 22:** Earth Day walk. Celebrate by joining the Franklin Bird Club for a bird walk along the Greenway. Early spring migrants will be featured. Meet at Salali Lane at 8:00 am. Parking is off Fox Ridge Road which is just south of Franklin Flea Market on Highlands Rd. Sponsored by Franklin Bird Club. Call 828-524-5234. Highlands car-poolers should meet at the Highlands Town Hall at 7:15 a.m. sharp. Romney Bathurst to co-lead.

**May 2:** Beginners' morning, starting at 8:30 a.m. at Town Hall parking lot, Russ Regnery leading with Edwin and Kay Poole, at Pooles' home, which features lovely native plant-filled gardens and many feeders. Learn about the fascinating birds of our mountains. Binoculars and field guides will be provided, no experience necessary!

**May 9:** Joint walk with Franklin Bird Club, Franklin bird experts, illustrators and authors John and Cathy Sill leading, with Romney assisting, to Standing Indian area in hopes of seeing Golden-winged Warblers, and other spring migrants. Meeting at 7:00 a.m., Highlands Town Hall parking lot. Those wishing to extend the morning should bring a packed lunch and drink to enjoy by the beautiful Nanatahala River, with Belted Kingfishers flying by!

**May 16:** Weih and Peterkin properties, Glenville area, Romney leading, meet at Highlands Town Hall parking lot, 7:30 a.m. Explore two lovely private properties and help add to their "yard" lists as we search for wood warblers and lots more. Michelle Styring assisting.

**May 19:** Tuesday, 5 p.m., Birds and Beer, Ugly Dog Pub, preceded by and/or followed by, birding in town, trying for owls around Harris Lake especially, Romney leading. Meet outside Ugly Dog Pub for a bit of town birding first.

**May 23:** Gorges State Park, Curtis Smalling leading. Curtis is NC Audubon's Director of Land Bird Conservation, and a fun, skilled leader. Gorges offers possibilities for Swainson's and Worm-eating Warblers, amongst many others. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Highlands Town Hall parking lot. Meet with Cashiers birders at 8:00 a.m. at new Cashiers Rec Center parking lot. Michelle Styring assisting.

**May 30:** Rich Gap Road, Brock Hutchins leading, meet at 7:30 a.m., Highlands Town Hall parking lot. Rich Gap Road is one of our local birding hot spots, featuring Scarlet Tanagers, possible Red-tailed Hawks, Black-throated Green

Warblers and many others. Easy, roadside birding.



**June 4:** Owl Prowl, Highlands Nature Center, 7:30 p.m. Program by the Charlotte Raptor Rehab Center with live birds! If weather permits, walks may be offered afterwards to search for owls around town. Bring a flashlight if you intend to participate. Co-sponsored by the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society and Highlands Nature Center. Parking is limited, please try to carpool wherever possible. Cynthia Strain and others will lead.

**June 6:** Beginners' morning, starting at 8:30 a.m. – Bird-banding at the Tessentee Reserve, Franklin. George Kaye to lead. Your chance to see birds up close and personal, plus learn about scientific field work and help with releases. Meet at Highlands Town Hall at 7:30 a.m. Carpooling is essential as parking at Tessentee is limited. Bring water and a folding chair if desired. Be prepared for long grass that may be wet with dew.

## HPAS Program Schedule 2015

Programs generally begin at 7:30 p.m., preceded by a time for fellowship and refreshments, starting at 7:00 p.m. Additional details about these programs will be available on the web site as the dates approach.

**May 26:** In the old gym at the Highlands School 7:00 p.m. Wings to Soar, co-sponsored by Mountain Wildlife Days and HPAS, features raptors such as hawks, falcons and eagles, some flying over the audience. It is free and open to the public and is especially appropriate for children and families.

**June 4:** Highlands Biological Center 7:30 p.m. The Owl Prowl with an exhibition of live raptors (consider coming earlier for good seats, as it is very popular).

**June 8:** Highlands Civic Center. Pot Luck Supper at 6:00 p.m. followed by the program at 7:00 p.m. Curtis Smalling, Director of Land Bird Conservation for Audubon North Carolina, will present.

**June 22:** Hudson Library in Highlands, 7:00 p.m. Robbie Fearn, Director of the Donal C. O'Brien, Jr Audubon Sanctuary at Pine Island, NC, will present. Please enter through the rear door.

**July 6:** Hudson Library in Highlands, 7:00 p.m. John and Cathy Sill: "Birding in Alaska." The Sills, who are birders, authors and artists from Franklin, will present. Please enter through the rear door.

**July 20:** Hudson Library in Highlands, 7:00 p.m. PBS film, "Hummingbirds: Magic in the Air" will be shown. Please enter through the rear door.

**Aug. 3:** Hudson Library in Highlands, 7:00 p.m. PBS film, "Owl Power" will be shown. Please enter through the rear door.

**Aug. 9:** Highlands Civic Center Pavilion 5:00 p.m. Annual Picnic.

**Aug. 24:** Hudson Library in Highlands, 7:00 p.m. Ed and Cindy Boos will present "Wild Critter Adventures." The Booses are members of our chapter who accomplish truly extraordinary, professional level, avian photography. Please enter through the rear door.

**Sept. 14:** Hudson Library in Highlands, 7:00 p.m. Jamie Harrelson, our grant recipient for her Master's research underway at Western Carolina University, will present. Jamie is studying Golden-Winged Warbler populations, and will present the results of her research on this threatened bird. Please enter through the rear door.

**Sept. 28:** Highlands Civic Center 7:00 p.m. Annual Meeting, followed by a presentation from William McReynolds, “Social Behavior in Birds: Murder, Dissimulation and Exaltation in the Avian World.” William, a member of our chapter, is a retired professor and still practicing clinical psychologist, who is sure to offer us unusual insights.

### **Smalling presenting CLE class in Highlands**



Curtis Smalling will be presenting a CLE class in Highlands on Friday, June 5, from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. entitled “Birding Beyond the Feeder.” Curtis is Audubon NC Director of Land Bird Conservation. For more information or to register go to [www.clehighlands.com](http://www.clehighlands.com). This class will discuss why the plateau is so rich in birds, identify some of the amazing birds that call this region home and explore ways to enjoy them including when and how to look for them in your yards and away from your feeders.

### **Wings to Soar Flying Exhibition coming to Highlands**

One of the Southeast’s premier raptor presentations, Wings to Soar, will bring birds of prey to the old gym of the Highlands School, located at 545 Pierson Drive, off of South Fifth Street, in an entertaining and informative program for people of all ages. The show starts at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26, and is free and open to the public.

John Stokes and Dale Kernahan, a dynamic twosome who are professional presenters at Rock City, will provide a fun-filled evening designed to educate those attending about nature and birds of prey including eagles, hawks, owls and falcons.

The presentations combines music, videos and live birds of prey flying over the audience and giving a whole new meaning to the phrase, “fly by.”

Long associated with the “Eagle Lady,” Doris Mager, both John and Dale are creating their own legacy as exceptional presenters of Wings to Soar. They have been deeply involved in rehabilitation of a variety of birds of prey, including an American Bald Eagle who lost a wing and is now involved in their educational programs. Also, restoration of Peregrine Falcons has been a cooperative endeavor with Rock City where seven captive hatched falcons have been released into the wild.

The mission of Wings to Soar is to create awareness about the vital role birds of prey play in the natural world. Through their exiting outreach programs, they strive to take environmental education to new heights and give audiences a unique opportunity to view and interact with a variety of birds of prey, up close.

This event is free and is provided for all adults and children in Cashiers, Highlands, Sapphire, Toxaway and surrounding areas. It is a part of Mountain Wildlife Days Outreach and is being co-sponsored by the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society.

For additional information, contact John Edwards, director of Mountain Wildlife Days, at 828-743-9648.

### **Mountain Wildlife Days July 17-July 18**

The 12<sup>th</sup> annual Mountain Wildlife Days will be held July 17 and July 18 at Sapphire Valley Resort. Mountain Wildlife Days features unique opportunities for children and adults to get up close and learn more about wildlife and wild places. The event includes informative and entertaining programs that focus on live animals with wildlife experts, designed to develop awareness and a deeper appreciation of the beauty and wonder of nature. HPAS is conducting a bird walk for this year’s event. Learn more at [www.mountainwildlifedays.com](http://www.mountainwildlifedays.com).

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