



# The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – June 2017

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 . . .*

## **Bird Personas: Real or Imagined?**

I've been mulling over some human character traits that, in my experience, often seem to typify some of my birder acquaintances (with varying levels of birding expertise). What follows is the beginning of an informal list. See if you agree and what you might add or subtract from the list.

Curious (about lots of things, not only birds), enthusiastic, observant, present in the moment, compassionate, thoughtful, unhurried but energetic, careful, imaginative, open to new ideas, willing to acknowledge what they don't know and passionate (some may even self-identify as obsessive!)

Of course, I recognize not all birders fit neatly into my amateur personality 'pigeon holes.' And of course, I know non-birders who do (examples of botanists, geologists, hikers and artist friends come to mind immediately). And we could probably all agree that not all birders have great personalities. However, I'm beginning to seriously think that perhaps birding is at least one curious conduit for connecting an individual's personality with the environment in a way that can foster what I think of as several worthy character traits.

If I am correct, perhaps the interest in birding has to do with a person's willingness to be exposed to multiple new observations and experiences on a routine basis, while resisting the temptation to focus only on a very limited subject pallet (or to not focus at all); it may not have as much to do with birds in particular as with an openness to new observations/information.

We are not born as birders or with preformed personas. Does birding cultivate desirable personality traits or are persons drawn to birding because of pre-existing experiences and influences? I suspect it is a combination of both. I'm curious to know what you think.

*Russell Regnery*

## **Chapter Potluck Meeting**

On Tuesday, June 6, we meet at the Highlands Civic/Rec Center at 6:00 p.m. for our first evening meeting and our traditional potluck dinner. Last year we were overwhelmed with desserts and hope to see a few more entrées this year. Sheila Peavey is organizing this event and would appreciate emails on what food items people plan to bring. She can be reached at [SheilaPeavey@gmail.com](mailto:SheilaPeavey@gmail.com) or 828-200-0174.

Our featured speaker, Curtis Smalling with Audubon North Carolina, will talk about bird populations and the current state of avian success in our area. Always popular, Curtis is the head of land bird conservation for North Carolina. He has said that population changes will sweep across North Carolina as temperatures and habitats change.

## Golden-winged Warbler Survey



From left Lauren Whitenack, Michelle Ruigrok, Aimee Tomcho and Kyle Pursel conduct surveys of Golden-Winged Warblers in Jackson County. Below: A beautiful Scarlet Tanager.



On May 8, Aimee Tomcho, Conservation Biologist with Audubon North Carolina, came to the Highlands Plateau to survey the presence of the declining Golden-winged Warbler. Loss of breeding habitat—early successional forest areas mixed with just the right amount of mature forest—and hybridization have contributed to the loss of over half of these New World warblers in the last 50 years. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology reports that the population decline has been greatest in the Appalachian Mountains where the presence of this bird is down 98 percent.

Participating in this one-day survey were Lauren Whitenack, a student from UNC Chapel Hill completing a required tutorial as part of her senior thesis, Michelle Ruigrok of The Wilderness Society, Kyle Pursel with the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and William McReynolds with Highlands Plateau Audubon Society. Lauren Whitenack was testing predictions made by a statistical model that predicts the locations of suitable habitat for Golden-winged Warblers on the Highlands Plateau and elsewhere.

Standardized survey techniques, data forms and monitoring protocol were provided by the Cornell Lab. Sites surveyed included the Salt Rock Gap area of Snowbird and the Doubleday property at the end of Flat Mountain Road. No “Goldens” were seen although many other species were seen and heard including an arresting treetop sighting of a Scarlet Tanager.

## Membership Report

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](http://www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org)) and mail it to: HPAS, P.O. Box 833, Highlands, NC 28741.

We have had five new memberships this year. Please welcome our new members!

Bettie Coley

Joseph and Llewellyn Moore

Jim and Ann Urbanski

George and Jan Lee

Marcus Simpson Jr. and Marilyn Westphal

## Wings to Soar for Earth Day



Students are captivated by a Barn Owl during the 'Wings to Soar' program in April.

On April 20, more than 500 people were thrilled by bird of prey programs presented by "Wings to Soar" to celebrate Earth Day at schools in Highlands and Cashiers. Students were mesmerized by the free flying vulture flying inches over their heads and getting up close to a peregrine falcon, screech owl, barn owl, red-tailed hawk and bald eagle.

HPAS and Mountain Wildlife Outreach cosponsored the three programs while Russ Regnery and Ann Campbell facilitated the events. Dale Kernahan and John Stokes from Trenton, GA were the presenters and are the co-founders of "Wings to Soar," an organization which travels around the US to raise raptor awareness.

## Nest Box Activity

Once again we are having good nesting responses in our bird boxes. Just look at these photos of the WCU grad student, Sarah Britton, checking out some Chickadee babies!



Britton places all of the siblings in a makeshift container, which sits on a special scale that weighs them. These little guys will double in size in a matter of a few days.



Western Carolina University grad student, Sarah Britton, shows these tiny Carolina chickadees nestlings to participants Bill and Wendy Ricci, as she prepares to examine each for differences in size or to make note of any abnormalities.



## Summer HPAS Outings, Activities & Programs

*Visit [www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org](http://www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org) or call 828-526-1939. All events are free. Birders of all levels are welcome.*

**June 3** - Birding for beginners and beyond at Cashiers Commons with Russ Regnery, President of HPAS. Meet at the Cashiers Rec Center at 7:30 a.m. Easy walking; loaner binoculars available.

**June 6** - Chapter Potluck Dinner at 6 p.m. followed by a presentation by NC Audubon's Curtis Smalling speaking about "How Our Local Birds are Doing: A Species Rollcall." The presentation will begin at 7:30 p.m. Both events are at the Highlands Civic Center, 600 N 4th Street.

**June 8** - Birding in Panthertown Valley with Brent Martin, Southern Appalachian Regional Director with The Wilderness Society. Meet at 7 a.m. at the Cashiers Rec Center. Bring water and your camera. Long uphill walk on return leg will be taken slowly!

**June 10** - New date! Brent Martin of Alarka Expeditions will lead in Panthertown Valley. This trip will leave early at 7 a.m. from the Cashiers Rec. Center. There will be a long, slow uphill walk back out of Panthertown. Hiking boots or shoes are recommended.

**June 13** - The Charlotte Raptor Rehab Center presents "Birds of the World" at 7 p.m. at the Highlands Biological Station at 265 N 6th Street. This family-friendly program will feature exotic, non-native birds of prey from all over the world including one of the most elusive owls on the planet.

**June 17** - Birding with Brock Hutchins to Jones Gap and Turtle Pond Road. Meet at Founders Park in Highlands at 7:30 a.m. Moderate amount of easy hiking; loaner binoculars available.

**June 20** - Birds & Beer (or wine or tea) at the Ugly Dog in Highlands. Spirited discussion of birds and birding starting at 5:30 p.m. and continuing with sandwiches and other pub grub.

**June 24** - Curtis Smalling, Director of Conservation, NC Audubon, will lead a walk along Rich Gap Road, Highlands. Meet at Founders Park at 7:30 a.m.; loaner binoculars will be available. Roadside birding: easy.

**June 27** - "Hello Mister: A Birding Tour Adventure in Indonesia" by Romney Bathurst at 7 p.m. in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library in Highlands, 554 Main Street.

**July 1** - Birding for Beginners & Beyond, with Russ Regnery at the Highlands Nature Center. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Nature Center, 930 Horse Cove Road. Easy walking, loaner binoculars available.

**July 11** - Birds & Beer (or wine or tea) at the Ugly Dog in Cashiers. Spirited discussion of birds and birding starting at 5:30 p.m. and continuing with sandwiches and other pub grub.

**July 14 & 15** - "Mountain Wildlife Days" co-sponsored at the Sapphire Valley Community Center, featuring a mixture of adult and children's programs. Live animals, expert commentary, music and outstanding photography contribute to helping develop appreciation of and connection with nature and wildlife. Bird walk Friday, July 14, meeting at Cashiers Rec Center, 355 Frank Allen Road, at 8 a.m. Loaner binoculars available; easy, flat walking.

**July 19** - Kim Brand, Bird-Friendly Communities Coordinator for Audubon North Carolina, will speak on "Plants for Birds" at 7 p.m. in Highlands in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library, 554 Main Street.

**July 25** - "Avian Photography" presented at 7 p.m. by award-winning photographer Dick Dickinson in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library in Highlands, 554 Main St.

**Aug. 5** - Birding for Beginners & Beyond with Russ Regnery on Flat Mountain. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Founders Park, Highlands. Easy trail walking. Loaner binoculars available.

**Aug. 8** - "John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature," a PBS American Masters film, presented at 7 p.m. in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library, 554 Main Street.

**Aug. 13** - Annual HPAS summer picnic at the Recreation Center Pavilion in Highlands at 600 N 4th Street. Come at 6 p.m. with a covered dish. Meat will be provided. Set up at 5 p.m.

**Aug. 22** - Birds & Beer (or wine or tea) at the Ugly Dog in Highlands. Spirited discussion of birds and birding starting at 5:30 p.m. and continuing with sandwiches and other pub grub.

**Aug. 29** - "The American Bald Eagle" a dramatic PBS Nature Series film, depicting our national bird, at 7 p.m.

in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library, 554 Main Street in Highlands.

**Sept. 12** – “Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge: Conserving some of the Mountain’s Rarest Places and Species,” a talk by Susan Cameron, wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, at 7 p.m. in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library, 554 Main Street in Highlands.

**Sept. 16-** Annual Charlie Davis Memorial Blue Ridge Parkway Outing searching for migrating warblers, vireos, thrushes and raptors. Meet at Founders Park in Highlands at 7:00 a.m. or Cashiers Rec. Center at 7:30 a.m. Roadside birding, some easy walking; loaner binoculars available. 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.

**Sept. 18-** Hawk Watch at Whiteside Mountain if weather and winds are suitable. Call Brock Hutchins, 828-787-1387 or 404-295-0663 to join the email notification list.

**Sept. 26-** Annual Chapter meeting and presentation; Michelle Ruigrok & Bill Peavey describe the Audubon Camp at Hog Island, Maine at 7:00 p.m. at the Highlands Civic Center, 600 N 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

***Mark your calendars:***

The Christmas Count will be Friday, Dec. 15 – it’s not too early to plan to join us, so mark your calendar for a fun outing!

## **12 Tips for Feeding the Birds**

- Clean your feeders at least twice a year
- If you want a variety of birds, use a variety of foods. Sunflower seed, millet and hummingbird nectar are favorites.
- Always wash your hands before and after filling or cleaning your feeders to avoid spreading germs.
- Bird feeder placement is important. Choose sites where birds have cover, can perch and eat.
- Provide water in your garden. There are ways to heat it in the winter. Change the water frequently.
- Select one area of your yard or garden for feeding. This will keep reseeding and seed residue in one location.
- Keep seeds dry.
- Don’t mix bird houses and bird feeders.
- When you pick out a feeder, look for those with large openings for easy filling.
- You can feed birds all year long; however, most people feed in winter months.
- Birds are beneficial. They eat a lot of insects, like mosquitoes and gnats, so it’s good to keep them around your house.
- Feeding the birds can be rewarding and fun. It decreases stress for you and the birds.

## **Volunteer with HPAS**

We are recruiting for the following leadership positions: Secretary, Chair for the Field Trips Committee and Chair for the Nominating & Leadership Development Committee.

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. HPAS has a healthy organizational structure that encourages turnover of leadership of directors and committee chairpersons after completion of several years of service. The ‘price we pay’ for healthy leadership turnover is that the organization must routinely find new volunteer leaders. We must cultivate our own homegrown leadership.

HPAS directors and committees have a good time working together. If you aren’t already, please consider volunteering to the long-term viability of HPAS. Let us know if you are interested.

***Russell Regnery***

## Officers

**President** -- Russ Regnery, 404-558-1085  
**Vice - President** – Bill Peavey, 828-369-1553

**Secretary** – vacant  
**Treasurer** – Brock Hutchins, 770-486-3715

## Directors and Committee Chairs

**Communications** – Michelle Ruigrok  
**Conservation** – Kyle Pursel  
**Education** – Ann Campbell  
**Field Trips** – vacant  
**Finance** – Brock Hutchins  
**Hospitality** – Sheila Peavey  
**Membership & Development** – Mary Jo Askew and Sarah Pursel  
**Nest Boxes** – Michelle Styring  
**Newsletter Editor:** Jessica Webb

**Nominating & Leadership Development** – vacant  
**Program** – Bill Peavey

**At Large** – Romney Bathurst    Glenda Zahner  
                  Pat Strickland        Jeremy Hyman  
                  Mary Palmer Dargan  
                  Olga Milenkaya  
                  George Kaye  
**Web Master:** Jean McCormick



**Highlands Plateau Audubon Society**  
**P. O. Box 833**  
**Highlands, NC 28741**