



The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – June 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.

HPAS Annual Meeting and Program, June 11

The Annual Membership Meeting will take place on Monday, June 11, at the Highlands Civic Center. The meeting will be preceded by a potluck supper beginning at 6:00 pm. A brief business meeting will follow at 7:15 pm, followed by the program at 7:30 pm.

“Hope Is the Thing with Feathers: Why Birds Matter,” will be the program presented by Curtis Smalling, Important Bird Areas Coordinator and Mountain Program Manager for Audubon North Carolina. “In this presentation,” said Smalling, “we will look at why birds matter – to me, to the ecosystem of Highlands, to the region, to the Flyway, to you, and why they should matter to others. We will look at this from several angles, not just the biological. This is a very personal program for me that I hope will inspire reflection and action.” You will not want to miss this one!

The primary business of the Annual Meeting is the election of Directors for HPAS. The nominating committee has presented the following slate: Brock Hutchins (Highlands), George Kaye (Franklin), Kyle Purcel (Brevard), and Don Shure (Scaly Mountain), each for a term of three years. Nominations will be accepted from the floor; the nominator must have determined that the nominee is willing to serve and meets the requirements for election.

Please bring a dish to share – and an implement to serve it! This gathering is always a great time to visit with old friends and make new ones.

President’s Message

The spring-summer birding season has started off with a bang! The first of our HPAS series of introductory birding outings (typically the first Saturday of every month), began and ended at the Bascom Art Center and included a good and up-close view of a Red-shouldered Hawk (perched just off the Highlands Greenway trail), a cooperative Chestnut-sided Warbler, as well as a special private showing afterwards of the Bascom’s current exhibit “Chicks: It’s All Gone to the Birds.” Scarlet Tanagers and cooperative Indigo Buntings added color to an already beautiful excursion to the Southern Highlands Reserve on Mount Toxaway. And there were more birds than everyone, except perhaps Curtis Smalling (our guest leader), could begin to keep up with on the popular outing to Lonesome Valley.

I’ve been encouraged to see many ‘repeat’ participants at this season’s outings including one neophyte who was heard to enthusiastically declare, “I’m psyched and I’ll be on more of these outings!” Dr. Patrick McMillan (of PBS notoriety) was recently in the neighborhood as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Highlands Botanical Garden, and Dr. Rob Bierregaard is teaching a university-level ornithology class at the Highlands Biological Station. Add to this the various activities of the Franklin Bird Club and an “EcoTour” outing, co-sponsored by HPAS and the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and I think it is fair to say that the spirit and fun of field ornithology is off to a very good start this year.

On a practical note, members who have joined National Audubon “directly” are automatically considered members of local Audubon Society chapters, such as the HPAS. This will not change. However, in the past, HPAS has included everyone in our area who joined National Audubon “directly” as part of our local chapter newsletter mailings, whether or not we ever hear from them regarding participation in the local organization; there are quite a large number of people! In a move to cut costs, save paper, and perhaps limit cluttering some persons’ mailboxes with unwanted mailings, the Board of Directors of the HPAS has decided to keep in touch with local National Audubon members, who are not also dues paying HPAS members, with a once-a-year hardcopy newsletter mailing. Of course, the HPAS website (www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org) is always accessible to everyone and is perhaps the most expedient way to keep up-to-date with local HPAS activities.

If you are unsure of your Audubon Society membership status (yes, it can get rather confusing!) please write or email Pat Strickland, akabeebe1@yahoo.com, Membership Chair. Of course if you are a member of HPAS and would rather get the regular newsletter via email (and not get a hard copy), please e-mail Edwin Poole, kaywick@nctv.com, with that request. In any case, we hope that National Audubon-only members will consider participating in HPAS activities and help make our local program as successful as we can.

Highlands Audubon Visits the South Carolina Coast

On April 21st ten members of Highlands Audubon traveled to Murrell’s Inlet for two days of birding. We visited Huntington Beach State Park where we met Steve Thomas from Waccamaw Audubon who introduced us to the park and showed us the best places to bird. Some of us took a long walk on the beach to the jetty at Murrell’s Inlet where we saw Piping and Wilson’s Plovers. Across US Highway 17 from the park was Brookgreen Gardens where we found good birding in its sculpture gardens, wetlands and park-like habitat. In the end, our trip list totaled 108 species. An out of area Spring field trip has become a tradition, so look for it next year and join us.

Southern Highlands Reserve

It was really a dark and stormy night... but with fingers crossed, 19 intrepid birders ventured out in the still gloomy morning on May 8th. And the gamble paid off!! The Southern Highlands Reserve proved to be a fascinating, educational and beautiful place for all, and with birds too! We were guided on our walk by the SHR staff, investigating the many native wildflowers in bloom, as well as many Indigo Buntings, one stunning Scarlet Tanager, several Chestnut-sided Warblers, and a brown water snake, too. The views were spectacular, the hospitality was super, and Ann Campbell spoiled us all by supplementing picnic lunches with lots of goodies. It didn’t rain a drop until we left at 1PM!

Lonesome Valley

HPAS gathered its largest group ever for a field trip to Lonesome Valley on the 12th of May. The morning was perfect for birding – overcast, calm winds, plus the expertise of Audubon NC IBA and Mountain Program Director, Curtis Smalling. With 39 eager participants, Curtis worked his usual magic in showing people great birds while educating them about their life histories, habits and migration. Kyle Purcel, from HCLT also gave a short talk about the conservation easements in and around Lonesome Valley. The total number of species seen and heard was 44, not bad for only 3 ½ hours! Highlights were the mob of Cedar Waxwings in the blooming Poplars, a very cooperative male Blackburnian Warbler with his mate, and numerous Tree Swallows zooming right over our heads. The proliferation and variety of birds at Lonesome Valley is truly a treasure, with the extensive patch of native trees and plants providing the caterpillars, bugs and nesting sites that are so vital to our breeding birds, both year-rounders and migrants.

Education

May 9: HPAS and Wild South co-sponsored a Doris Mager raptor program to over 135 K-5 students from Summit Charter with about 25 other visitors. May 15: Romney and Ann led a bird walk and bird activities with some home schooled teens from Highlands. May 30: Our 5th wetland bird walk with Marsha LaFontaine's students took place from Summit Charter School.

Thanks to all the HPAS members who assisted with these fun and educational outings during the 2011-2012 school year.

Things do not slow down when school is out! We will be helping the Highlands Literacy Council with their "Nature Detective" day camp and The Bascom with their "Bird Brain" camp for children. We also plan to provide programs for several libraries in the area.

Field Trips

Having gotten off to a great start in May, your Field Trips/Outings Committee has another two months (and more) of exciting birding lined up for you! For the rest of the season, groups will meet in the parking lot behind the Highlands Town Hall, near the public restrooms, rather than The Bascom, unless otherwise noted. If the walk is to be in Highlands, Cashiers area participants will need to be at the Highlands meeting spot at 7:30AM. If the walk is in the Cashiers area, those participants will meet in the parking area behind Wendy's by 8:00AM, while Highlands area participants will meet at the usual Highlands spot at 7:30AM to carpool to the Cashiers meeting point. Please feel free to bring interested family and friends – all are welcome and there is no charge for any of these activities.

June 7, Thursday: The annual Owl Prowl will begin at 7:00PM at the Highlands Nature Center on Whiteside Cove Rd. This popular program is presented by the Raptor Rehabilitation Center and features live birds and an excellent education on raptors in general, and owls in particular. Following the program, as darkness descends, HPAS leaders Cynthia Strain and Brock Hutchins will join Patrick Brannon in leading groups to sites around town where owls may be seen. Please bring flashlight, a warm jacket and binoculars. Some binoculars will be available for loan to those who may not have them. Parking is limited, so please carpool wherever possible.

June 9, Saturday: Our President, Russ Regnery, assisted by Michelle Styring and Glenda Zahner, will lead a walk to Flat Mt. Road in Highlands. News Flash: Curtis Smalling may be co-leading this walk! Stops may include the old Ranger Station (for Canada, Hooded and other wood warblers, possible nesting Flickers, Indigo Bunting), Forest Service tree farm (for possible Field Sparrows), and a private property which includes meadow and forested habitats (think Turkeys, amongst others!), if time permits. Meet at 7:30AM as noted above. Please call 743-9670 with questions about the walk.

June 16, Saturday: Field trip to Rich Gap Road with past HPAS President Cynthia Strain leading. Cynthia is a leading area photographer with years of experience with the birds of Highlands, and will be assisted by Pat Strickland. This will be roadside birding with such outstanding possible species as Broad-winged Hawk, Worm-eating and Hooded Warblers, Wood Thrush, and Scarlet Tanager. Please bring binoculars (loaners will be available), water, and cameras. Walking will be limited and relatively easy. If you have questions, please call Pat at 743-7421.

June 23, Saturday: The Chinquapin Reserve at Panthertown will be today's exciting destination, led by Russ Regnery with Ann Campbell assisting. There is some up and down-hill hiking involved, so stout footwear is recommended. This beautiful reserve has much to offer – birds, of course, but wildlife and waterfalls too, as well as good botanizing. Please bring sunscreen & hat, water, binoculars and camera. Highlands group will meet as usual behind the Town Hall at 7:30, while the Cashiers area participants will meet behind Wendy's no later than 8AM. The two groups will carpool from there for a drive of approximately ½ hr. to the Reserve. Please call Ann at 743-9942 for further information.

June 30 Saturday: Romney Bathurst will lead a walk at the Highlands Nature Center, Botanical Gardens, and Sunset Rocks. As parking is very limited at the Nature Center, all participants should meet at behind the Town Hall at 7:30. Migrant breeding birds will have slowed down by this time, but we may find some in “eclipse” plumage, others still in their breeding best. Walking will be slow and easy, bring water, binoculars and cameras. Please call assistant Michelle Styring for further information, 743-9670.----*Continued on page 5:*

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

Memberships for the 2012-13 year have begun to come in. Is yours one of them? We hope so, because the chapter has many activities planned for this year and we are already off to a great start with several very successful activities as mentioned in the newsletter.

We want to welcome and recognize our new members whose memberships were received before the printing of the newsletter:

- David Redfield – Tallahassee, FL
- Jenna & Robin Dial - Highlands & Colombia, SC
- Jim & Ellen Shelton Cullowhee & Tallahassee, FL
- John & Carolyn Carpenter – Highlands
- Kyle Pursel – Brevard
- Nancy Gaddy & David Moscowitz – Highlands & Atlanta, GA
- Richard & Susan Yow – Marietta, GA
- Sallie & Patrick Taylor – Highlands
- William & Sheila Peavey – Highlands

Highlands Plateau Audubon Society (HPAS): Full Chapter Membership

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

Summer Mailing Address

City/State/Zip

Telephone

Email

Winter address, if different:

Telephone

From: _____ To: _____

Months for this address

* For those joining at the levels of Friend and above, if you choose, we will pay your dues as a Highlands Plateau Chapter member of the National Audubon Society. Please indicate: _____ yes _____ no, thanks

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July 7: Saturday: As usual for the first Saturday of the month, this will be a walk geared especially for beginners, with assistance and education in using binoculars, field guides, and spotting birds in the field. The group will carpool from the parking lot behind the Highlands Town Hall at 7:30, to a home on Mirror Lake with exceptionally active feeders and lovely wildflower gardens. Brock Hutchins will lead, with Edwin Poole assisting. Please call Brock at 787-1387 with questions.

July 14: Saturday: Rich Gap Road will be today's destination, with Romney Bathurst and Pat Strickland leading. It will be interesting to see what we find vs. the earlier trip in June, always an instructive lesson in when and where birds are breeding in our area. We may well see some newly fledged birds! Roadside birding will be predominant. Questions? Please call Pat at 743-7421.

July 20: Friday: Our walk this week is offered in conjunction with the Mountain Wildlife Days celebration in Sapphire Valley (today and tomorrow). Our group will meet at the Cashiers Post Office (please note the change in location and day!) at 8:00 AM. The Village Green's boardwalk and environs will be an easy birding venue with such possibilities as Swamp Sparrow, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-winged Blackbird, and maybe even Eastern Screech Owl (heard there during a walk with Summit Charter School students this winter!). Those wishing to carpool from Highlands should meet behind the Town Hall no later than 7:30. Our leader will be Russ Regnery, assisted by Michelle Styring. NOTE that there will be no Saturday walk this week!

July 28: Saturday: The Old Ranger Station on Flat Mountain Road will give us a chance to catch up with some Indigo Buntings and Chestnut-sided Warblers, amongst others in the successional growth and forested habitats. Romney Bathurst will lead, assisted by Pat Strickland. We will explore further along Flat Mt. Rd. as time permits. Please bring water, stout walking shoes, binoculars and cameras. If you have questions or concerns, please call Pat at 743-7421.

Stay tuned for news of August and Sept. walks in our next issue (July) and please do check our web site for the latest details. Be sure to refer others to our web site too – Jean McCormick is doing a great job keeping it current.

Upcoming Programs

Unless otherwise noted, all programs will be at the Highlands Civic Center. Refreshments and conversation begin at 7:00 PM with the program at 7:30 PM. If you have questions call Don Shure, 770-939-9417, or Avary Doubleday, 526-8414.

June 7, Thursday: The annual Owl Prowl will begin at 7:30PM at the Highlands Nature Center on Whiteside Cove Road. This popular program co-sponsored with the Highlands Nature Center, is presented by the Carolina Raptor Center and features live birds and an excellent education on raptors in general, and owls in particular. Following the program, as darkness descends, HPAS leaders Cynthia Strain and Brock Hutchins will join Patrick Brannon in leading groups to sites around town where owls may be seen. Please bring flashlight, a warm jacket and binoculars. Some binoculars will be available for loan to those who may not have them. Parking is very limited, so please carpool wherever possible. Questions: call the Nature Center at 526-2221.

June 9, Saturday. At 4:00PM, Dr. Lloyd Newberry will speak at The Bascom. Dr. Newberry has worldwide experience with many bird species, and his collection of decoys and ducks, as well as important early prints, forms a vital part of the current Bascom exhibit, "Chicks – It's All Gone to the Birds!" If you haven't yet seen this exhibit, co-sponsored by Audubon NC, you can catch up with it this month, but only until June 17th.

June 11, Monday. See Page 1 for details on the potluck supper and Annual Meeting.

June 16, Saturday. At 4PM entertaining author John Yow will speak at The Bascom on his latest book, *The Armchair Birder Goes Coastal*. This is part of the "Chicks" exhibit, and admission is free to all.

July 9, Monday. Dr. Douglas Pratt, NC Museum of Natural Sciences, will present "Birds of Hawaii: Evolutionary History and Current Status."

July 23, Monday. HPAS member, Board member, and world traveler, Romney Bathurst will present "Around the World in 80 Birds."

August 12, Sunday. HPAS Annual Picnic is scheduled for the pavilions at the Rec Center in Highlands at 5:00PM. Check www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org in July for further details. If you can help with this event, please contact Jan at mtnmules@msn.com or 743-5318.

Other Events of Interest

Tuesday, June 19, Falconry: the Ancient Connection, sponsored by the Hudson Library in Highlands, at the Library, 1:30 p.m., 526-3031

Tuesday, June 26, Winged Hunters: Birds of Prey, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust at Village Commons in Cashiers, www.hicashlt.org, 526-1111

Every Thursday, Zahner Lecture Series, Highlands Nature Center, 7:00 p.m., www.highlandsbiological.org, 526-2221

Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

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Vice - President – Avary Doubleday, 526-8414

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Nominating & Leadership Development - Open

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