



The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – October 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.

President's Message

I was reminded recently of an event several years ago that helped to rekindle my interest in birding and the Audubon Society, after having been a relatively dormant birder for much of my 'professional life.' There is an old grassy field on our land that has been maintained as open space at least since the early 1800's, and this meadow essentially 'parts' the forest in an otherwise wooded valley, which happens to run north-south. A little to the north of the meadow is a gap between high mountain ridges. This time of year (mid-September, as this is being written) an hour or so before the sunset, and when conditions are right, it is possible to watch an almost constant parade of migrating warblers passing along the trees at the meadow's sun-lit easterly edge. I imagine (perhaps not entirely correctly) that these birds have spent much of the day resting in our forest, prior to rousing in the early evening, and subsequently departing silently for epic nocturnal flights south. While the meadow is still sun-lit, smaller birds appear to be funneled around the meadow's forested edge to avoid flying across the wide-open field, and they snack in the trees along the way. How many of them pass through our valley? On a still, early fall evening, I sit with binoculars in hand watching the trees that line the meadow's edge, and I am reminded of having a front row seat of a movie theater and watching the giant screen with individual ornaments of bird life moving from north to south in a hushed, migratory parade.

When I first came to live in the mountains, and observed the same migratory phenomenon several years ago, my birding skills were rusty and I couldn't begin to keep up with the cast of characters making their appearances 'on the big screen.' I was unable to fully appreciate a portion of the grand southerly migration of woodland birds that was taking place in front of me. So I decided to re-join a local Audubon chapter and work on becoming more familiar with the birds that coexist in, or at least pass through, our Southern Appalachian environment.

Nowadays I still don't pretend to recognize each individual "confusing fall warbler" as they work their way south along the forest's edge. However, with renewed experience, a little practice, and help from Audubon chapter friends, I feel much more at home with the cast of avian characters that parade in front and indeed all around me (most of them are Tennessee Warblers as you may have guessed!). To be honest, I suspect and hope that our valley really isn't so special, and that the same wave of migrating birds is sweeping over our entire region this time of year in an equally spectacular manner. However, I know for sure that on early fall evenings, when conditions are right, our meadow and forest invite me to witness a glimpse of one of the great seasonal events of the forests of North America.

Russ Regnery

Local Audubon NC Board Member

HPAS Vice President, Avary Doubleday, has recently been elected to the Audubon North Carolina Board of Trustees. As one of only two of fifteen current ANC Trustees from Western North Carolina, Avary will be an important spokesperson for mountain regional Audubon issues. Congratulations, Avary!

2012-2013 Planning Retreat

The HPAS Directors plan to rendezvous on October 16 for a daylong annual program-planning review to identify successes and possible failures from the past birding season and to discuss strategic planning for seasons to come. If you have comments or suggestions that you would like to have considered at the planning session, please either email the President or otherwise communicate your idea to an HPAS Director as soon as possible.

Operating Year Change

The HPAS Directors have unanimously decided to recommend to the membership that we reorganize our administrative calendar around the calendar year that begins January 1. The Audubon planning year has until now begun July 1 and, at least for our mountain chapter, this complicates planning activities that require continuity over the course of maximal, spring-summer bird activity. And of course changing administrative agendas in mid-summer coincides with the maximal human seasonal activities in the mountains, which complicates planning human activities. The new administrative calendar will include continuing to vote for new officers during the (late) summer; however, budget and program planning will use January as the starting point. The transition will be submitted for approval at our next annual meeting; however, we plan to informally initiate some of the practical aspects of the new planning cycle as we anticipate the new year.

Field Trips

The Field Trip Committee, ably lead by Brock Hutchins, reports a very successful season of weekly bird trips. These regularly scheduled trips were new for HPAS this year and represent a considerable increase in the commitment of all involved as assistants and leaders. Brock reports that the great variety of trips has drawn attendance in excess of 275 people, with the number of species seen ranging from 108 on the two day trip to Murrell's Inlet, SC, to 15 during a beginners' session at the Poole's home. The average number of species seen on regular Saturday walks for which reports are available was 27. While there is no special stress on sheer numbers, the participation and the variety of venues for our walks have been impressive for this initial year of weekly outings. The addition of a designated "Beginners" walk each month has been especially popular.

It is anticipated that HPAS will continue to offer these free outings each Saturday during the 2013 season and we hope to involve more of our members in assisting the leaders – no need to be an expert, so please do think about helping us out. Watch your HPAS newsletter and web site for announcements as the walks become scheduled early next spring.

Upcoming Programs

October 6 will be the date of the final field trip of the fall for the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society. As this is the first Saturday of the month, the trip will be beginner-friendly, welcoming people who want to learn to bird. Binoculars will be available. This trip will wander around local hot spots in the Highlands area. Meet at the public restroom parking lot next door to the Highlands Town Hall at 7:30 am. Call Brock Hutchins at 787-1387 for additional information.

In addition, there will be a winter outing to Lake Junaluska with a special focus on waterfowl in January, 2013.

*The following page (unnumbered page 3) is our
Members List as of September 24, 2012
You may remove it and use it for future reference.
Continue reading the newsletter on page 4.*

2012 Members of Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

Special thanks to all our Local Chapter members. Your generous support of our growing organization has provided funding for expanded activities in our mountain community.

The list reflects payments received through September 24, 2012.

Patron (\$500 - \$999)

Jenna Dial

Donors (\$250 - \$499)

Pat Davis

Gerry & Avary Doubleday

Lydia Macauley

Don & Janice Shure

Friends (\$100 - \$249)

Jim & Mary Jo Askew

Bill & Romney Bathurst

Susan Davis

Lawrence & Vevie Dimmitt

Lynn Ezell

John & Jan Gallaher

Stuart & Sharon Gleman

Beth Greenlee

John & Cynthia Gross

Nathan & Kathryn Hendricks III

Bob & Sally Hershner

Ennis & Dru James

Mike & Susan Kaiser

Michael & Suzanne Magalis

Kathie Marsh

Don & Jean McCormick

Phil & Lynn Miller

Herman Moll

John & Diane North

Carroll & Triddy Peacock

Bill & Sheila Peavey

Kyle Pursel

David Redfield

Russ & Helen Regnery

Jim & Diane Riddle

Steve & Marti Senterfit

Robert & Susan Smith

Pat Strickland

Jim & Michelle Styring

Dick & Althea Thomas

Wayne & Becky Watkins

Richard & Susan Yow

Glenda Zahner

Family (\$25 - \$99)

Paul & Dee Andry

Ed & Cindy Boos

Harvey & Ann Cabaniss

Mike & Ann Campbell

Alex & Virginia Cann

John & Phyllis Edwards

Chuck & Mary Finegan

Gary & Carol Forrester

Nancy Gaddy & David Moscovitz

Gayle & Kathy Hamrick

Walker & Elvy Harris

David & Mercedes Heller

Ronald & Jean Hunnicutt

Mike & Martha Hunter

Brock & Patty Hutchins

Jack & Robyn McCulloch

Judy Panders

Edwin & Kay Poole

Jim & Ellen Shelton

Guy & Mary Silva

Bill & Rosemary Stiefel

John & Jennie Stowers

Patrick & Sallie Taylor

David & Sally Thorne

John & Jeanne Tyrer

Ted & Mary Lou Waas

Rick & Carolyn Waghorne

Jim & Elaine Whitehurst

Wilbur & Rubie Wilcox

Allison & Grace Wilder

Karen Wiley

Walter & Sarah Morgan Wingfield

Individual (\$15 - \$24)

Jack Bornemann

Peg Brannen

Anne Brissey

John Carpenter

Polly Curry

Butch Ellars

Jane Glass

Jeannie Grady

Jack Johnston

George Kaye

Pat Lanzillotti

Joanne Lindquist

Helen Moore

Nancy Myers

Cathi Overton

Rosemary Plane

Peggy Post

Joe Riva

Ron Robeson

Marleen Salo

Louis Schweizer

John Sills

John Speer

Cynthia Strain

CORPORATE WORKING PARTNER

Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library

Highlands Biological Foundation

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust

Highlands Chamber of Commerce

Highlands Nature Center

Highlands Plateau Greenway

Hudson Library, Highlands

Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance

Land Stewards of the Highlands Plateau

Land Trust of the Little Tennessee

Mountain Garden Club

Summit Charter School

The Bascom

WHLC Radio Station

Christmas Bird Count

The 2012 Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Friday, December 14. After spending a full morning in teams covering our assigned count area, participants gather for a chili lunch and recap of the day's results. Interested birders of all skill levels are welcome and needed. Contact Brock Hutchins, 787-1387 or 770-486-3715, to volunteer to help or with questions. And check the web site for the most current information.

2012 Education Wrap Up

What a great season of educational opportunities! Our collaborative efforts included:

- Offered a Center for Life Enrichment bird class led by Curtis Smalling.
- Assisted The Bascom with their Bird Brain Camp and backpacks for the Chicks exhibit.
- Provided activities for the Highlands Literacy Council's Backyard Detective Camp.
- HPAS and Wild South co-sponsored 2 raptor programs for local schools.
- Doris Mager on May 9 for Summit Charter School.
- Michael Skinner on October 5 for Blue Ridge School.

We provided displays for:

- The Hudson Library in Highlands in June.
- The Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library in Cashiers in July.
- Wildlife Days in Sapphire Valley on July 21.

A special thanks to all board members and other volunteers that have made possible several school projects. HPAS led 5 bird walks for 3-5 grade students for Summit Charter School during the 2011-2012 school year with 60 students and 17 adults participating.

Two teachers at Summit Charter School, Janis Brannon and Marsha LaFontaine, as well as their students, participated in Treasure Highlands activities and recorded their data on-line.

The IBA grant was awarded to Summit Charter School in order to enhance their HPAS Native Plant Garden. Southern Highlands Reserve has offered to propagate the native plants that are on the school's wish list.

HPAS has made a donation to the Highlands Middle School Courtyard Project and will donate two bird nesting boxes next year. We will encourage teachers to use this space as an outdoor classroom. We also donated two bird field guides to the Highlands School Library.

We are planning more school projects for 2012-2013, a CLE bird class in Spring 2013, and continue to look for additional ways to partner with other organizations in environmental education.

2012 HPAS PROGRAMS DRAW 425+!!

The Programs Committee, under the leadership of Don Shure, HPAS Past President, presented a varied and excellent selection of talks, films, and slide shows this year, which had a total attendance of 428, surely a record for our Audubon Society. Programs ranged from the academically oriented, with Mark Hopey, of Southern Appalachian Raptor Research, followed by Dr. Doug Pratt from the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, to Dr. Jeremy Hyman, of Western Carolina University. NC Audubon's own Curtis Smalling presented two well received programs, while Romney Bathurst and Ed Boos presented photos of birds and wildlife from Florida to birding spots around the world. Our local libraries were the sites for the three screenings of "The Big Year," which 39 attendees enjoyed. Our annual meeting and picnic each enjoyed good attendance, as did the annual Owl Prowl. Presented in conjunction with the Highlands Biological Station, that evening program alone drew 96 people, both young and old. Through programs such as these, HPAS is able to spread the word on the joys of birding and the importance of conserving our mountain habitats.

The schedule of programs for 2013 will soon be taking shape, and promises to be equally varied and interesting. Ideas for speakers are always welcome, so please don't hesitate to contact any Board Member with your suggestions! Your input is important and always welcome. A word of special thanks to our hard-working Communications Committee for their excellent work in publicizing our events this year – well done!

Charlie Davis Memorial Blue Ridge Parkway Trip

Charlie Davis played a pivotal role in the early years of Highlands Plateau Audubon Society, serving as treasurer with good humor and grace for many years. His background in a lifelong career of accountancy, plus his love of nature, made him the perfect go-to guy for both our local chapter and for Audubon NC, where he served the Board well with his experience as an accountant. He was a man of the mountains, having been born and raised in Western NC and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout as he was growing up in Waynesville. He was a talented birder who knew and loved well the Blue Ridge Parkway, and happily participated in our outings each year, usually arriving with something yummy from a fast food stop en route to our meeting point. Pat Davis too contributed her talents to our Board, and her warm muffins were often a highlight of early morning starts. Pat maintains her interest in and support for our work, for which we are most fortunate and grateful. Charlie will continue to be missed by all who came to know his quick wit and smile, his enthusiasm for all things in nature, and his valuable contributions to Audubon in time and treasure.

The First Annual Charlie Davis Memorial Blue Ridge Parkway outing drew 27 and a fine time was had by all. The outing included great fellowship and a beautiful morning on the Parkway with a good sampling of fall migrants. The presence of a group of Pat and Charlie Davis's friends who came all the way from Valdosta, GA, made the trip all the more special, with lots of laughter as many shared their memories of Charlie and the early days of Highlands Plateau Audubon. Surely this will continue to be one of the highlights of our annual field trip schedule.

Highlands Hawk Watch at Whiteside Mountain

There are hundreds of hawk watches around the nation at this time of year. Local birders travel to special locations that seem to attract migrating hawks to count and observe the soaring raptors. In many locations such as Cape May, New Jersey, or Grandfather Mountain, North Carolina, it is a daily ritual to count the hawks and to keep careful records of their observations.

We think we have found one such place here on the Highlands Plateau. It is the top of Whiteside Mountain. In just four days and only nine hours of observation in September we have a total count of 462 raptors passing over Whiteside Mountain. Most of the hawks are Broad-winged Hawks, but several other species have also been sighted including Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, and Osprey.

It seems Whiteside Mountain is a geological feature that attracts migrating hawks because of their passing by on a regular basis and almost always in the same direction. Please contact Brock Hutchins if you would like to help Highlands Audubon learn more about Whiteside Mountain and migrating hawks.

For the Birds

Be sure to read the birding article in the Fall edition of "Legacy."

This publication is included in your local newspaper and available at other locations in Cashiers and Highlands.

Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

Officers

President - Russ Regnery, 404-558-1085

Vice - President - Avary Doubleday, 526-8414

Secretary - Cathi Overton, 787-1387

Treasurer - Mike Kaiser, 526-5071

Directors and Committee Chairs

Communications - Avary Doubleday

Conservation - Russ Regnery

Education - Ann Campbell

Field Trips - Brock Hutchins

Finance - Mike Kaiser

Hospitality - Mary Lou Waas

Membership & Development - Pat Strickland

Nominating & Leadership Development - Don Shure

Program - Open

At Large - Romney Bathurst

George Kaye

Kyle Pursel

Michelle Styring

Glenda Zahner

Newsletter Editor: John Gross

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