



2009 Meetings

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| Monday, January 26 | Ft. Bragg Aquatics Program. Chuck Bryan and Amy Young of Ft. Bragg's Endangered Species Branch will talk about their work doing aquatic inventories on Ft. Bragg. |
| Monday, February 23 | A Ranger in the Land Down Under. Join Ranger Kim Hyre for a look at this amazing continent through the eyes of a ranger. |
| Monday, March 23 | Sandhills Native Bees. Sam Droege, biologist with USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, will give a presentation on his work in identifying and monitoring native bees. Sam has been doing field work in the Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge. He developed a Handy Bee ID Manual which can be downloaded at http://bio2.elmira.edu/fieldbio/ . |
| Monday, April 27 | Morrow Mt. State Park. This nearby state park has it all: 18 miles of hiking trails, camping, horseback riding, fishing, picnic areas, cabins, historic structures, canoeing and an Olympic size swimming pool. It was also a very important Native American site, has nesting Bald Eagles, and has an excellent variety of plants and animals. Join a ranger for an in-depth look at all this park has to offer. |
| Monday, May 18 | TBA |
| Monday, June 22 | TBA |

Meeting Times: 7:00 p.m. - Fellowship and Socializing. 7:30 p.m. - Meeting and Program
Program Location: Weymouth Woods Visitors' Center Auditorium.
Phone 910-692-2167 for directions.

*** We normally meet on the 4th Monday of each month. ***

Upcoming Field Trips

IMPORTANT: *Call the field trip leader to register for a trip. Please call at least one day before the trip to ensure that the trip is still on schedule.*

January 24** 5 a.m. **Birds & Bears at Pungo.** Once again we will make the long trip to Pungo Lake to see the huge flocks of snow geese, tundra swans, and other waterfowl. We will likely see many bald eagles and other raptors. Bear sign will be plentiful, and we hope to see one or more this year. Red wolves, fox, and bobcat are possible. Meet at Wal-Mart. The drive one-way is 3.5 hours. Bring food, water, and everything you need for your personal comfort. We will leave promptly at 5 a.m. Trip leader: Scott Hartley - 910.638.5225 or 910.692.2167.

****NOTE DATE CHANGE****

February 7 7 a.m. **Jordan Lake.** Meet at Weymouth Woods for a trip to Jordan Lake. We will scan the lake from several access points for waterfowl, loons, grebes, eagles, etc. We will also visit the new Jordan Lake Visitor Center. Bring lunch and dress for short hikes, including some potentially muddy spots. Plan on returning by mid-afternoon. We will leave promptly at 7 a.m. Trip leader: Scott Hartley – scott.hartley@ncmail.net or picoides@windstream.net or 910-692-2167.

February 14 6:45 a.m. **Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge.** This NWR is known for its abundant waterfowl. We will have a private tour of areas in this NWR that are normally not open to the public. The refuge manager will first take us to the Lowgrounds impoundment and then to an impoundment on the Richmond County side of the Pee Dee River. After that we will be on our own and plan to visit Sullivan's Pond and Gaddy's Mill Pond, which is privately owned and has attracted waterfowl since the 1930s. We plan to be finished with our waterfowl observations by noon, and those not wishing to bird in the afternoon may return to Southern Pines. For those staying on, we will bird various places in the area off-limits to hunting. The refuge is located approximately six miles north of Wadesboro on US 52. For those wishing to carpool, meet at the Aberdeen Town and Country Plaza parking lot. We will leave promptly at 6:45 a.m. since the drive from there is slightly over one hour. For those wishing to drive directly the NWR, we will meet in the NWR office parking lot (across from the public restroom) at 8 a.m. Our tour will start at 8:15 a.m. **SPACE IS LIMITED.** You must sign up with the tour leader. Bring binoculars, a spotting scope if you have one, water and lunch if you plan to bird the afternoon. Tour leader: David McCloy – david.mccloy@ncmail.net or 910-692-5094.

February 28 **Stargazing.** Time and location to be announced. Trip leader: Scott Hartley – scott.hartley@ncmail.net or picoides@windstream.net or 910-692-2167.

March 7 6 a.m. **Riverbend Park, Conover, NC.** We will explore a variety of wildlife habitat ranging from freshwater wetland to upland forest, allowing for a wide variety of bird species. The park features one mile of shoreline on the Catawba River in the upper Piedmont of western North Carolina. We will leave from the parking lot in front of Lowe's Foods at Olmstead Village on Hwy 211. Drive time is approximately 2.5 hours. Bring lunch and personal items for your comfort. We will return to Pinehurst between 4 and 5 p.m. We will leave promptly at 6 a.m. Trip leader: Carol Bowman - cbowman6@nc.rr.com or 910-690-9388.

March 21 1 p.m. **Dragons & Damsels.** Join us for a hike around Weymouth Woods to look for early spring dragonflies and damselflies. We will learn how to net, hold, and identify these awesome animals. Meet at Weymouth Woods. Trip leader: Scott Hartley – scott.hartley@ncmail.net or picoides@windstream.net or 910-692-2167.

April 11 8 a.m. **Frosted Elfin Foray.** We will spend the day cruising the sand roads in the Sandhills Game Lands looking for blooming lupine and frosted elfins. While elfins will be our primary target, we will look for odonates, birds, herps, plants, and other butterflies as well. Bring lunch and all the stuff you need for your personal comfort. Restrooms will be few or nonexistent depending on where we are. Plan on returning before 3 p.m. Meet at Weymouth Woods. We will leave promptly at 8 a.m. Trip leader: Scott Hartley – scott.hartley@ncmail.net or picoides@windsteam.net.

Trip Leaders Needed

I receive a lot of trip ideas from members and what I need is members to lead these trips. You don't have to be an expert to lead a trip. You just need to be the willing to schedule, meet, and do the logistics. I know many of you are much better at this than me! So please consider leading one of the following trips:

Falls Lake – Triangle Lakes for waterfowl.
Eno River State Park – Wildflowers in spring, birding in spring, hiking anytime.
Uhwarrie National Forest
Joyce Kilmer National Forest
Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Center
Canoe/Kayak – Black River/Lumber River, etc.
Bay Lakes
Bog Turtle Search

If you have other field trip ideas or would be willing to lead one of these trips, please contact me at 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337. Scott Hartley

Trip Reports

Huntington Beach State Park, SC November 8

On Saturday, November 8, five early birders got up well before the crack of dawn to travel to Huntington Beach State Park in Murrells Inlet, SC. These brave birders were Carol Bowman, Marjorie Ludwig, Dave Verner, Pru Williams (who met us there), and I. The other four traveled (in style) from Southern Pines and arrived just after 8 o'clock. First we birded the causeway, which always yields the most birds on the trip and didn't disappoint. Both the Wood Storks and White Ibis were gathered there, as well as the Semipalmated Plovers and some peeps which we clearly determined were Western Sandpipers. I also spotted a Black-bellied Plover which we discussed for a while, trying to make it an American Golden-Plover. To our disappointment, the ducks had not arrived yet at HBSP, except for a pair of Green-winged Teals at the far end of the south side of the causeway (a lone Greater Yellowlegs was there as well). But the best treat of the causeway wasn't a bird at all, but an enormous Alligator swimming around in the south pond. Dave was thinking it was less than 15 feet, but I thought it was at least that! That thing reared almost its entire bulk out of the water and started bellowing, as Alligators occasionally do. Don't worry . . . it didn't get any of the birds, who looked like they could care less anyway. There was only one other gator, and he (she?) wasn't bellowing in the other's direction. Why do Alligators bellow? I guess because they can.

We next went to the Maxwell viewing platform overlooking the marsh at the end of the road through the park. This is where we've seen a Sora and the briefest glimpse of a Least Bittern in the past. Today, there were just Coots and a Common Moorhen, otherwise known as the Common Gallinule. Then it was off to the jetty. This is the spot in the park from which one can see Purple Sandpipers. Of course, you really only have a 10% chance of seeing them, but if you're leading a group, you should strategically leave that part out as it's a 1.2 mile walk one-way. Not that there wasn't a lot of bird activity. Along the way, you see Sanderlings darting in and out of the surf. Just before we had almost reached the jetty, three waves of Black Skimmers flew overhead! Most prevalent on the jetty were the Ruddy Turnstones, which will come to within a foot to see if you have any fish to give them. A Royal Tern flew overhead, and there was some debate over another tern, whether it was a Forster's or a Common. I think it had the light orange bill (with no black) to indicate the former. There was a lone Great Black-backed Gull on the beach on the other side of the jetty, and, way out on the water, hundreds of Northern Gannets were diving for fish. Only Dave had a single Loon sighting, though.

We walked back along the jetty inland. In the marsh, we heard a Clapper Rail, and in the fields we saw a Kestrel, a Phoebe, and a pair of Northern Harriers. Then we walked back through the sand and grass to end up back at the beach about halfway between the jetty and the path back to the parking lot. I went on ahead, only to find out that Pru had gotten her American Golden-Plover on the beach! As soon as everyone had returned to the parking lot, we went to the visitor's center, which has the feeders where Painted Buntings are seen (but not today), for a picnic lunch. After lunch, we made our way out onto the pier, from which we saw two Bald Eagles and an Osprey carrying his meal. All in all, it was a beautiful day for birding, and our final count was 55 species. (Patrick Shaffner)

Owl Prowl November 29

The forecast predicted a dark and stormy night, although a light drizzle was the only outcome. The setting looked right for creatures of the night, but owls were laying low. Perhaps it was a demonstration of their reputed wisdom??

On Saturday, November 29, at 6:30 p.m., Scott Hartley led a group of eight: Brady Beck, Michael McCloy, Barbara Simpson, John & Leslie Watschke, and guests Fred & Sandra Brown. The group made five roadside stops near likely owl habitats west of Aberdeen near the Sandhills Game Lands area.

Scott made outstanding calls for Barred, Great Horned, Screech-, and Saw-whet owls. His voice imitations and taped calls brought no live results except a distant answer from two Screech-Owls. Even though owl voices were quiet that evening, it was an outstanding opportunity for novice "owlers" in the group. We could listen to each call repeated in settings that were representative of owl habitat. The trip was well worth the time and damp conditions for that experience alone. (Leslie Watschke)

Woodlake December 13

On December 13, Scott Hartley led a group of ten other avid birders to Woodlake for a morning of very productive birding. Upon arriving, we saw a small flock of Canada Geese in a golf course pond along the entrance road, although two of these birds seemed odd. As we parked in the parking lot beside the clubhouse, the flock took flight and we were able to identify these two "oddballs" as young Snow Geese!

As the group took a short walk, the vegetation alongside the driving range beside the parking lot produced passerines such as Palm Warblers and Eastern Phoebes. When we walked out onto the point, a third-year Bald Eagle was perched in a tree along the lakeshore. As we progressed to the south side of the lake, we also saw an adult eagle. The south side of the lake also produced two Bonaparte's and two Herring Gulls, which we were able to pick out from a larger flock of Ring-billed Gulls. The dam at the southern end provided us with a good vantage point for waterfowl, such as two Horned Grebes. A good variety of ducks were seen from various points along the lake during the course of the morning, such as Canvasbacks, Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, and Ruddy Ducks.

On the way back, a few of us stopped at the field across from the BP gas station near Woodlake, where we saw several Horned Larks and American Pipits. The trip list numbered about 55 species. (Michael McCloy)

Photography Spotlight



©Frank Ripp, 2008 Pocosin Lakes NWR, Pungo Unit, Snow Geese in flight.

Of This and That.....

Christmas Bird Count

On Sunday, December 21st, 40 volunteers counted 96 species of birds during the annual Southern Pines CBC. The fifteen-mile diameter area is centered in Lakeview and encompasses most of the eastern portion of Moore County. Challenging field conditions (i.e. trouble seeing and hearing) due to morning rain made it hard work this year. Also, the higher than usual water level at Woodlake meant no shorebirds present and fewer dabbling duck species than normal. A common Goldeneye was a nice surprise on Ft. Bragg, perhaps due to the cold weather up north. Warm weather preceding the count most likely resulted in a number of Palm Warblers in three different areas of the circle. And, as we have expected would eventually be the case, Fish Crows were encountered by several observers this year, reflecting the fact that more of these birds are overwintering here alongside our non-migratory American Crows nowadays. The best bird for the count was a male Orange-crowned Warbler, a regular at the Campbell's feeder since November. Although this is a species that winters in eastern North Carolina, it has not been seen on our count before. Also, four Snow Geese seen both just before and after the 21st made the count as well.

Thanks to everyone who participated and especially to those who brought goodies to the lunchtime countdown. We would also like to express our appreciation to Weymouth Woods for once again hosting our lunchtime meeting. (Susan Campbell and Michael McCloy)

The Great Backyard Bird Count

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count will take place February 13–16, 2009. Anyone can take part by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes or as long as you want. The best part is you can participate and not even leave your house. Just count the birds at your feeder. Submit your checklist on-line or by mail. Last year over 85,000 checklists were submitted. For more information, go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

North Carolina Native Plant Society - NW Sandhills Chapter

For those of you that have expressed interest in being involved with the newly forming NW Sandhills Chapter of the NC Native Plant Society, we are planning several "organizational meetings" over the next two months. You do not need to be a member to attend these meetings, but we hope you will consider joining! The purpose of these meetings will be:

1. Generate interest in a Sandhills Chapter.
2. Discuss recruitment of new members.
3. Decide a day and time for regular meetings.
4. Discuss what types of activities folks would like to participate in.
5. Schedule tentative events for the upcoming year.
6. Discuss Chapter organization including future election of officers.

The first meeting was held on Sunday, January 11th at 2 p.m. at Weymouth Woods (upstairs in the library).

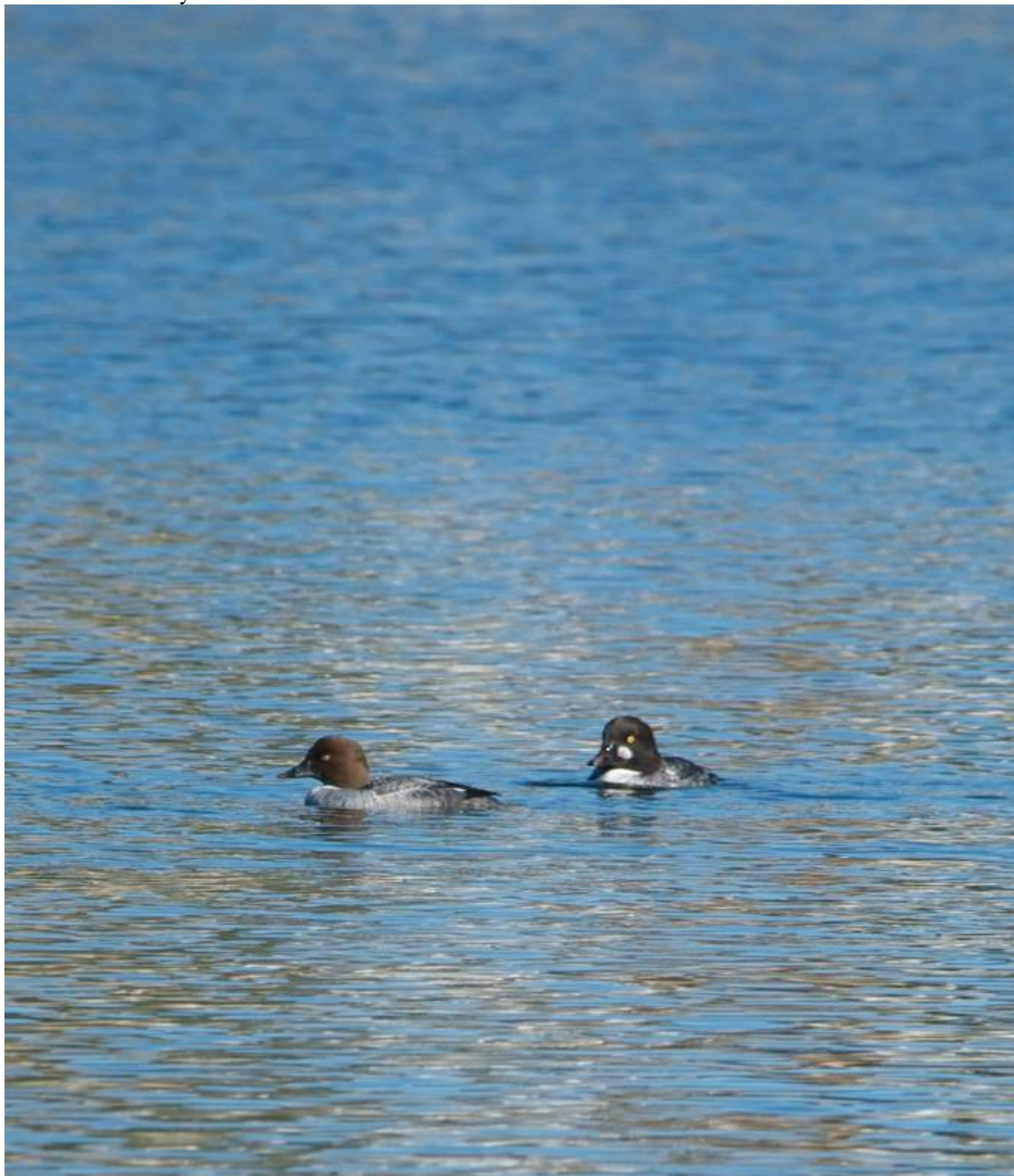
The second meeting will be held Sunday, February 22nd at 2 p.m. at Weymouth Woods (subject to change depending on first meeting).

If you are interested in being a part of this new organization, please try to make it to a meeting and bring a friend! If you can't make a meeting but have questions, ideas, or other comments, please email them to me.

Tracy Rush
Chapter Chair
NW Sandhills Chapter
NC Native Plant Society
tracy@ncwildflower.org or mtrush@earthlink.net

Interesting Sightings:

Common Goldeneye



On December 10 I observed two “different looking” ducks in a small raft of Buffleheads on Lake Pinehurst in the area of the dam on Diamondhead Drive. Needing a scope for further identification, I called Cassie Willis and we were able to relocate the ducks in the afternoon and identified them through the scope as a pair of Common Goldeneye. These ducks are unusual for our area and have remained on the lake into January. David Kilpatrick shares a picture of the handsome couple. David Kilpatrick had (in addition to the goldeneye pair) 9 horned grebes on Lk. Pinehurst on 12/29... (Carol Bowman)

Pine Siskins



You may have noticed a Pine Siskin or two in your yard this year. You are not alone. Pine Siskins have been invading feeders in the Sandhills. It is not unusual to see 20, 30, or more Pine Siskins at your feeder. Many of us, including the Campbells, the Doles, Bruce Sorrie and Weymouth Woods, have been refilling nyger and black oil sunflower feeders regularly in recent days. David Kilpatrick shares a picture of a Pine Siskin in his yard.

Reminder - Pay Your Dues NOW! Dues are \$5 per person, per year. The dues year is from January 1 through December 31. Please mail your check, payable to Sandhills Natural History Society, to Carol Bowman, Treasurer, at:

Sandhills Natural History Society
P.O. Box 1472
Southern Pines, NC 28388-1472

Please include your address, telephone number, and e-mail address with your payment.

Reminder! Recycle your nature, birding, or gardening magazines at each monthly meeting. There will be a table where you can drop off or pick up magazines of interest to our group.

TEES AND LANDS' END CAPS – SNHS merchandise can be purchased at Wild Birds Unlimited, near Harris Teeter, Route 1, in Aberdeen. SNHS members enjoy a 5% discount at WBU. Thanks to WBU's owner, Bill Kastern, for supporting our club! Contact David Kilpatrick at 910-295-5224 or at snhslogo@mac.com if you have any questions.

\$10	T-shirts
\$17	Baseball Caps (with embroidered logo)
\$14	Baseball Caps (with plain logo)
\$12	Mugs
\$ 3	Stickers

SNHS Board of Directors 2009:

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C/o Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve
1024 N. Fort Bragg Road
Southern Pines, NC 28387

ATTENTION!!!

If you have email and are experiencing trouble receiving all the newsletters and announcements via email, please contact Chris Norkus immediately. info@sandhillsnature.org

If you do not have email, please read this:

Our field trips often have schedule changes and we send out email updates to the membership. We suggest you ask a friend who receives these emails to keep you informed. You can also periodically call the field trip leader to get the latest updates.