

SANDHILLS NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter
Spring 2006

Spring/Summer 2006 Meetings

Tuesday, April 25: Brian Ackers – Mushroom life cycles.
Tuesday, May 23: Mark Salser - Honeybees and Beekeeping.
Monday, June 26: Dave Davenport – Mountain Gorillas.
Monday, July 24: TBA.
Monday August 28: TBA.
Monday, September 25: Jesse Perry – Spiders.
Monday, October 23: Wayne Irvin – Alaska or Iceland.

Meeting Times: 7:00pm—Socializing, 7:30 pm—Program.

Location: North Building, Penick Village (E. Rhode Island Ave. Extension, Southern Pines.)

Phone 692-0300 for directions or go to www.penickvillage.org and click on “directions.”

In June we will be moving our meetings to the 4th Monday of each month.

Upcoming Field Trips

IMPORTANT: CALL WEYMOUTH WOODS (692-2167) TO REGISTER FOR TRIP. CALL WEYMOUTH AT LEAST ONE DAY BEFORE TRIP TO ENSURE THAT TRIP IS STILL ON SCHEDULE AND FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

- April 15** **Congaree National Park** - Meet at Weymouth Woods at 6:30 am for an all day trip to one of our newer National Parks. This 11,000 acre tract protects one of the largest tracts of old growth flood plain timber in the Southeast. We should see a good variety birds, bugs, herps and plant life. Bring lunch, bug spray, sunscreen and anything else you need for your personal comfort. We will return by 7-8pm.
- May 7** **Spring Bird Count** – Contact Susan Campbell if you are interested in helping. susan@ncaves.com or ncaves@earthlink.net.
- May 13** **Sandhills Game Lands** – Meet at Weymouth Woods at 6:30 am for a half day trip exploring the Sandhill Game Lands. We will look for breeding birds, butterflies, dragonflies, herps and plants. Stops will include Drowning Creek, Field Trial area and McKinney Lake.
- June 3** **Weymouth Butterfly Count** – We will spend the am at Weymouth looking for hairstreaks and others and after lunch will check the Boyd Tract/Weymouth Center gardens and Lake Aberdeen. Be prepared to encounter ticks! Contact Scott Hartley at 692-2167 for more information.
- June 10** **Bynum Bridge** - Fauna at Old Bynum Bridge and Haw River - Meet at Weymouth Woods at 8:00 a.m. to carpool to Bynum. Rendezvous with Bob Perkins at the service station/convenience store on US 15 just south of the US 64 Bypass (north of Pittsboro) at 9:00-9:15 a.m. Proceed from there to the bridge and the Haw River trail in Duke Forest. Bring sun protection and something to drink.

The walk will conclude between noon and 1:00 p.m. Contact Bob Perkins at rperkins@infionline.net

- June 17th** **New River** – Meet at the Wal-Mart parking lot at 6am for an all day trip to New River State Park. Bring lunch, rain gear, sun screen, etc. We hope to see a wide variety of breeding birds and will look for – least, willow and alder flycatcher, Baltimore oriole, golden-winged warbler and black-billed cuckoo. Butterflies, odonates and flowers will keep us busy if birds don't. Return by 8 pm-ish. Contact Scott Hartley for more information at 692-2167.
- June 21** **Pettigrew State Park Butterfly Count** – Contact Scott if you are interested in participating.
- July 15** **Dragons and Damsels** – Explore Lake Aberdeen for dragonflies and damselflies. We'll spend ½ day looking for and netting some. If it's not too hot and there is interest we will explore the sewer line easement and upper reaches of the lake. Meet at the Lake Aberdeen Park at 8am. Bring water, sunscreen, binoculars and bugspray.
- Aug 7/8/9** **Joyce Kilmer Weekend** – Details in next newsletter.

From the President's Desk: Susan Campbell

Southern Pines Spring Bird Count

The Annual Southern Pines Spring Bird Count is scheduled for Sunday May 7th. We are hoping to find 130-140 species of birds during the course of the day. Volunteers are needed to help cover our count circle. No experience is necessary. If you can help us, even for a few hours in the morning, please contact Susan Campbell at 949-3207 or susan@ncaves.com as soon as possible.

Sunrise Theater Programming Ideas.

SNHS member Cassie Willis is on the Filmpix Committee for Sunrise Theater, which is looking for programming ideas from the community. Cassie would appreciate hearing about films you would like to see at the Sunrise – interesting nature and science films, and other subjects as well. The films should not be headed for large commercial theaters. Cassie would enjoy hearing all your ideas, she can be reached at 693-1221 or cwillis740@aol.com.

Field Trip Reports

Amphibians by Jeff Beane.

On Saturday and Sunday, 4-5 March 2006, I led two SNHS field trips targeting winter-breeding amphibians of the Sandhills and some of their more unique habitats. Each trip included about 10 stops, scattered through Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland counties. Sites visited included four clay-based Carolina bays (all owned, at least in part, by The Nature Conservancy); a large artificial borrow pit; a large ephemeral pond of unknown origin; a permanent cypress lake; and some other small ponds and seeps.

Fourteen amphibian species were observed: *Notophthalmus viridescens dorsalis* Broken-striped Newt; *Ambystoma mabeei* Mabee's Salamander; *Ambystoma t. tigrinum* Eastern Tiger Salamander; *Desmognathus auriculatus* Southern Dusky Salamander; *Eurycea* sp. ("Red Sandhills Eurycea"); *Acris g. gryllus* Southern Cricket Frog; *Hyla femoralis* Pine Woods Treefrog; *Pseudacris crucifer* Spring Peeper; *Pseudacris nigrita* Southern Chorus frog; *Pseudacris ornata* Ornate Chorus Frog; *Rana c. capito* Carolina Gopher Frog; *Rana catesbeiana* American Bullfrog; *Rana c. clamitans* Bronze Frog; and *Rana sphenoccephala* Southern Leopard Frog.

The combined total species observed for the two days was 14 amphibian, three reptile, six mammal, and at least 47 bird species. Among the most interesting birds were several loggerhead shrikes, red-cockaded woodpeckers, and a blue-headed vireo. Visiting the unique Carolina bay habitats was a highlight of the trip for many. A good time was had by all, and everyone got to see something they had never seen before, including me.

Huntington Beach State Park, SC by Carol Bowman.

Eight members traveled to Huntington Beach State Park, SC on March 18. Bob Perkins led the group to the causeway, along the beach and out to the jetty where a day total of 56 species were seen including Piping Plover, Western and Purple Sandpiper, Tree & Cave Swallow, American Oystercatcher, Northern Gannett, Male Common Loon in breeding plumage, and Bald Eagle. The jetty at low tide yielded excellent photo opportunities and "up close and personal" looks at a number of shorebirds. Thanks to Cassie Willis for organizing this trip.

Raven Rock by Bruce A. Sorrie.

About 14 people showed up on a brisk, cool, but mostly sunny March 25. We drove to the entrance gate to Cedar Rock and walked a mile or so to the steep slopes and floodplain at the Cape Fear River. Enroute, we traveled through loblolly pine plantations and second-growth oak-hickory woods. The sunny trail yielded bird's-foot violet, two species of bluets, dwarf ipaecac, blue corporal dragonflies, a buckeye butterfly, tiger swallowtail, a turkey wing feather, oakleaf ball galls, and mistletoe at eyelevel. A former quarry pond had spring peepers, while road depression pools had northern cricket frogs. Black-and-white warbler and ruby-crowned kinglet were among the few migrants.

In places these uplands had excessively stony soil - officially called Lillington very gravelly sandy loam - with abundant stones smoothly rounded. Vegetation in such droughty soil is tinder dry, so fires are a frequent feature (at least historically). Evidence was provided by remnant sprigs of wiregrass and a few longleaf pines among the oaks and hickories. Practically nothing was growing in the dull brown leaf litter and no trees were leafing out yet.

As soon as we approached the river slopes, vegetation changed abruptly. Beech and Christmas fern were abundant. Many trees were opening buds; painted buckeye shrubs were putting out leaves. Cedar Rock sported lots of marginal woodfern, plus Virginia saxifrage in bloom. As we descended, the forest floor was alive with herbs. It was as if the clock had sprung forward, but in reality these spring ephemerals must complete their flowering before canopy leaf-out cuts off the sun's rays. Mayapple, spring beauty, dimpled troutlily, giant chickweed, and common blue violet were among the forest floor plants. Trees of this tall forest included beech, tulip poplar, swamp chestnut oak, pagoda oak (one 4 feet dbh), bitternut hickory, sycamore, southern sugar maple, and boxelder. Paw-paws were flowering and a few umbrella magnolias turned up. We walked southward to another outcrop, where the ground and the ledges were covered with yellow harlequin, spring beauty, saxifrage, Dutchman's britches, yellow violet, nemophila, northern troutlily, and the state rare eastern isopyrum gave us plenty to photograph and to marvel at while enjoying lunch. Birds included red-shouldered hawk, hermit thrush, pileated woodpecker, Louisiana waterthrush, Yellow-throated warbler, blue-headed vireo, and great blue heron.

Duke Primate Center by Carol Bowman.

Fourteen SNHS members caravanned to the Duke University Primate Center (DUPC) in Durham on Saturday April 1 for a tour of the facility. DUPC houses a wide array of prosimian species (small arboreal primates that evolved before monkeys and apes). Animals represented include the lemurs of Madagascar, the lorises of Asia and the bushbabies, or galagos of Africa. We were able to view diurnal sifakas, blue-eyed and ringtailed lemurs, and nocturnal aye-ayes and lorises, just to name a few of the very interesting creatures on display.

Prosimians are accustomed to tropical climates, so they remain enclosed during the 'winter' pen season, which was still in effect. Animals will be able to utilize adjacent, forested areas by mid-April. Another trip to DUPC will be organized in the late summer or early fall to observe and admire them in their outside habitats. Thanks to Kerry Brust for putting together this excellent field trip! <http://primatecenter.duke.edu>.

SANDHILLS NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
c/o Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve
1024 N. Fort Bragg Road
Southern Pines, NC 28387

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR WITH THE FIELD TRIP DATES

IMPORTANT: CALL WEYMOUTH WOODS (692-2167) TO REGISTER FOR A FIELD TRIP. CALL WEYMOUTH AT LEAST ONE DAY BEFORE TRIP TO ENSURE THAT TRIP IS STILL ON SCHEDULE AND FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

If you do not have email please read this:

Our field trips often have schedule changes and we send out e-mail updates to the membership.

We suggest you ask a friend who receives these e-mails to keep you informed. You can also periodically call Weymouth Woods to get the latest updates.

ANNUAL DUES

Dues are \$5 per person, payable to SNHS. Send c/o Beth Carpenter, 565 Orchard Road, Southern Pines, NC 28387. Please include with your payment your address, telephone number, and, as noted above, your e-mail address.