

*** 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.*

- 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 Elfin. 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. We will return before 3 p.m. Meet at Weymouth Woods. We will leave promptly at 8 a.m. Trip leader: Scott Hartley – scotthartley@ncmail.net or picoides@windstream.net.
- April 18** 2:00 p.m. **Damsels and Dragons.** Learn about the ecology of these winged eating machines. We will focus on field identification. We will hike about two miles. Bring binoculars, water, sunscreen, and bug spray. Meet at Weymouth Woods. For more information contact Scott Hartley at 910-638-5225 or 910-692-2167 or picoides@windstream.net.
- April 25** 8:00 a.m. **Bird Walk.** This is the day before our annual spring bird count. Come out for a two-mile hike to see what migrants are in the area. We can also count any bird seen on this day and not seen on the 26th as a “count week” bird. Meet at Weymouth Woods. Bring binoculars, water, sunscreen, and bug spray. For more information contact Carol Bowman at 910-295-0842/cell: 910-690-9388 or cbowman6@nc.rr.com.
- May 9** 7:00 a.m. **Raft Swamp Farm.** Jackie and Louie have invited us to come out and visit this working farm. They hosted a field trip for the last Carolina Bird Club meeting that produced a number of good birds—Mississippi Kite, Anhinga, and Bobolink, to name a few. The varied habitat will give us an opportunity to see a wide variety of plants, herps, and insect life. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen, bug spray, and binoculars. Meet at the Town and Country Shopping Center in Aberdeen behind Mt. Fuji. We will leave promptly at 7 a.m. For more information, contact Scott Hartley at 910-638-5225 or 910-692-2167 or picoides@windstream.net.
- May 16** **International Migratory Bird Day at Weymouth Woods.** Celebrate the diversity of neotropical migrants that come to North America to breed. We will offer bird walks, banding demonstrations, talks, exhibits, and other educational information. We are working on an agenda and will send it out once it’s final. We will also need help in a variety of ways. If you are interested in helping, contact Scott Hartley at 910-638-5225 or 910-692-2167 or picoides@windstream.net.
- May 30** 9:00 a.m. **Sandhills Gameland Wildflowers.** Join Bruce Sorrie for a trip to several locations in the Gamelands. This is a joint trip with the Sandhills Chapter of the NC Native Plant Society. Bring lunch, water, and bug repellent. There will be poison oak! We will return between 3:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. For more details, contact Bruce Sorrie at 910-949-2625 or bruce.sorrie@ncmail.net.

June 12-14

Joyce Kilmer & Synchronous Fireflies. See one of the last remaining stands of old growth cove hardwoods left in the eastern US, (hopefully) the only species of fireflies that flash synchronously, breeding warblers and other tropical breeders, wildflowers, salamanders, and much more on a weekend trip to North Carolina's far southwestern mountains. We will probably stay in Franklin, NC and visit Joyce Kilmer and Great Smoky Mountains National Park on Saturday and explore the parkway north to Asheville for high elevation birds, plants, etc. Contact Scott Hartley @ 910-638-5225 or 910-692-2167 or picocoides@windstream.net.

Trip Leaders Needed

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

- Falls Lake-Triangle Lakes for waterfowl.
- Eno River State Park – Wildflowers in spring, birding in spring, hiking anytime.
- Uwharrie 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

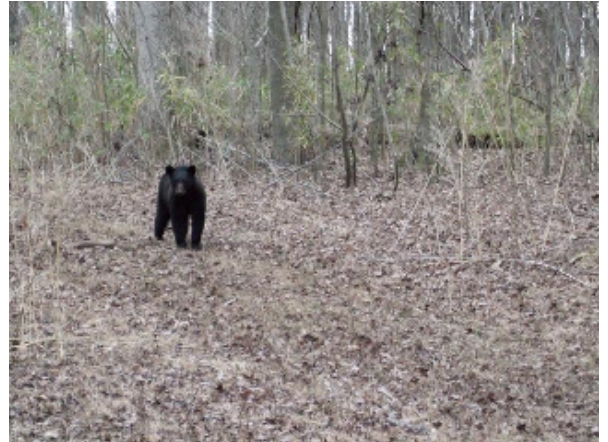
Trip Reports

Birds & Bears at Pungo

January 24



©Jeff Beane, 2009



Seventeen early risers made the long haul to the Pungo unit of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Unfortunately, the Snow Geese flock of 80,000 birds was not feeding in any of the fields around the lake. So we spent the first part of the morning checking the south side of the lake from the observation platform and the impoundments near the west boundary road. The birds seen from the platform were very distant and were tucked up into the west corner of the lake. There were lots of Tundra Swans and Snow Geese. Other waterfowl seen from this location were Mallards, American Widgeon, American Black Ducks, Pintails, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Northern Shovelers, Canada Geese, and Ring-billed Gulls. The highlight of the morning was a spectacular showing of Bald Eagles on the north side of the lake. There were easily 30-plus birds flying and diving into the

flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds. The majority were non-adult birds. We tried, or at least I tried, to make some of them into Golden Eagles, but—not! A couple of us also got a brief glimpse of a Black Bear as it crossed the road.

Other than the Eagle, the birding was relatively slow species-wise. So we decided to drive to Lake Mattamuskeet, eat lunch, and bird the causeway. This turned out to be a good move. We got excellent looks at most of the puddle ducks, lots of both species of Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and White Ibis. There had been a Common Black-headed Gull frequenting the causeway, but we saw only Bonaparte's. Michael McCloy and Jeff Beane found a very cooperative Orange-crowned Warbler.

We grudgingly left Mattamuskeet and headed back to Pungo to walk to the lake shore on the north side. Bear tracks and bear scat were everywhere. At the lake shore we saw a huge flock of Green-winged Teal and several Horned Grebes as well as the usual and already seen suspects.

While we were scoping the lake, someone in our group said, "Hey there's a bear." A fairly small bear was walking to the lake shore using the same path we had used. Jeff Beane was 10-15 yards from it and got a couple of pictures. The bear evidently figured Jeff wasn't a threat or worth eating and ambled away. On the hike back to our vehicles we saw four more bears at a distance, as well as a Gray Fox. At our cars, we were treated with seemingly endless lines of Snow Geese flying back to roost on the lake right at sunset. Most of the 80,000 Snow Geese present at the refuge flew right over us. The stark gray winter sky filled with thousands of these white and black birds was truly a beautiful spectacle and a fine way to end our day. (Scott Hartley)

Jordan Lake

February 7

Four folks made the short drive up US 1 to Jordan Lake. Our first stop was the dam area. Good numbers of Bald Eagles, over 25, had been reported to be congregating at the tail race to catch fish. We didn't have that many, but got really great looks of several birds. Only a few made forays up to the tail race area. There were a lot of people fishing, which may have deterred them. Land birding was good. We had lots of winter stuff and the highlight for me was 8-10 Purple Finches associated with Goldfinches in Sweet Gum trees. We also flushed a small flock of American Pipits below the dam.

We left the dam area and went to Ebenezer day use area. There we saw lots of Ring-billed Gulls, many Bonaparte's Gulls, and Cormorants out the ying-yang—no loons, but a few Horned Grebes. From there we made a quick visit to the newly renovated Jordan Lake State Recreation visitor center. They have a neat exhibit area with several interactive exhibits.

I don't have the total species seen, but I think we were close to 50 species. This is an area that is easy to explore, and we hope to visit more often at other times of the year. (Scott Hartley)

Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge February 14

The 16 members of the Sandhills Natural History Society who participated in this field trip had a chance to see waterfowl not normally seen by the general public. We greatly appreciate the efforts of JD Bricken, the refuge manager, who made this trip possible and led the group from 8:15 a.m. to almost 10:00 a.m. Although the weather was cloudy, damp, and cold and the birds were skittish and mostly seen on-the-wing, we did have good looks at some stationary individuals. Afterwards our visit to Gaddy's Mill Pond was interesting from a historical perspective and we did see a large number of Canada Geese and five Hooded Mergansers. After the weather warmed we birded along Wildlife Drive from about 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (members left at various times according to their schedules).

In addition to the waterfowl, the largest category of birds that we saw/heard was the woodpeckers. However, we had a wide variety of species (as listed below) with a final tally of 58. Many thanks for everyone's contributions on this field trip. (David McCloy)

WATERFOWL (5,000 to 6,000 individuals):

Canada Goose

Wood Duck

Gadwall

American Widgeon

American Black Duck

Mallard

Northern Shoveler

Northern Pintail

Green-winged Teal

Ring-necked Duck

Bufflehead

Hooded Merganser

Pied-billed Grebe

Great Blue Heron

Turkey Vulture

Bald Eagle

Northern Harrier

Red-tailed Hawk

Killdeer

Ring-billed Gull

Mourning Dove

Belted Kingfisher

WOODPECKERS:

Red-headed Woodpecker

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

Pileated Woodpecker

Eastern Phoebe

Blue Jay

American Crow

Carolina Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse

White-breasted Nuthatch

Brown-headed Nuthatch

Brown Creeper

Carolina Wren

Winter Wren

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Eastern Bluebird

Hermit Thrush

American Robin

Northern Mockingbird

European Starling

Pine Warbler

Common Yellowthroat

Eastern Towhee

Song Sparrow

Swamp Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

Northern Cardinal

Red-winged Blackbird

Eastern Meadowlark

Common Grackle

American Goldfinch

Endor Iron Furnace

March 8

On this warm (80°F) day, the intrepid band of David McCloy, Bruce Sorrie, and Audrey Pennington traveled to Cumnock in Lee County to the old Endor Iron Furnace. The young Loblolly Pines and Sweetgums along the entrance path suddenly gave way to unbroken hardwoods as we neared Deep River. We noted mesic mixed hardwoods on the upland and on the steep slope facing the river. Trees included White Oak, Red Oak, Red Maple, Southern Sugar Maple, Hop Hornbeam, Beech, Pignut Hickory, Redbud, and Dogwood. Christmas Fern and Trout Lilies were numerous. Alluvial forest originally covered the floodplain terrace, but has been altered (and reduced in size) by large deposits of waste material (slag piles) from the furnace. This tall forest included Hackberry, Swamp Chestnut Oak, Cherrybark Oak, Sycamore, American Elm, Tulip Poplar, Black Walnut, Boxelder, and Bladdernut. There were many large grape vines, but, fortunately, not much Privet. Aside from some Spring Beauties and Chickweed, there was not much flowering, but abundant Sweet Cicely, Yellow Harlequin, violets, and other plant species will be out in a couple of weeks.

The impressive old furnace is composed of big blocks of stone and some of its original construction has collapsed. This furnace smelted pig iron for the Confederacy during the Civil War. A supply of iron ore and coal was nearby.

Critters observed were: Upland Chorus Frog (many in man-made depressions) and American Toad (amphibians); Falcate Orangetip, Cloudless Sulphur, and Mourning Cloak (butterflies); and Pileated Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Crow, American Robin (many), Turkey Vulture, and Carolina Wren (birds). (Bruce Sorrie)

Stargazing

February 28

This was cancelled due to rain. It will be rescheduled at a later date.

Riverbend Park, Conover, NC

March 7

On March 7, 2009 a group of four birders from the Sandhills Natural History Society made the trip to Riverbend Park. Riverbend Park is a 450-acre county park located along the Catawba River, near Conover, NC. A diversity of habitats promised to produce a variety of bird species, and even though the birding was a bit slow, we did in fact have several notable sightings. For starters, Riverbend Park has an elaborate bird feeding station, where we saw, among other species, numerous Pine Siskins and several Purple Finches. We then walked about a two-mile loop along some of the park's trails, where we saw yet another uncommon winter bird, a Brown Creeper. Further along the river, near where park ranger Dwayne Martin pointed out a Bald Eagle nest, we saw an immature eagle, and judging by the extensively dark coloration, it was probably a local bird from last year. After an interesting morning of birding, we ate lunch along the river to cap off a productive day. Thanks again to Carol Bowman, our trip leader, and to Dwayne Martin, who graciously donated his morning to leading our group around the park and pointing out some interesting birds along the way. (Michael McCloy)

Photography Spotlight



Great Horned Owl digiscoped by David Kilpatrick from 75 yards away.

Of This and That.....

It's almost time once again for the Spring Bird Count!

On Sunday, April 26th, the annual Southern Pines Spring Bird Count will be held. Teams will cover a circular area, approximately 15 miles in diameter, centered at Lakeview in Vass. This is the same territory that is censused during the Christmas Bird Count. Some volunteers will begin counting before dawn in habitat known to contain owls and nightjars. By daybreak, all of the teams will be busy scouring local roads, trails, and bodies of water in search of birds of all kinds, from year-round residents such as Northern Bobwhite, Carolina Chickadees and Blue Jays to migrant shorebirds, warblers, and hawks. No doubt some lingering wintering species such as Pine Siskins and Cedar Waxwings may turn up in the mix. If you would like to join in for the day or just a few hours, we would love to include you. If you happen to live in the count area, you might consider watching your feeders for us on count day. Please contact Susan Campbell (910-949-3207 or susan@ncaves.com) for more information.

Hummingbird banding will resume on Wednesday mornings at Weymouth Woods.

Susan Campbell will once again be conducting her research on Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at Weymouth Woods this summer. Public banding sessions will be held Wednesday mornings outside of the park office beginning about 8 a.m. We already have some large groups scheduled to attend. Please call the office at Weymouth the week you plan to stop by to let Susan know you are coming (910-692-2167).

Thank You!

I would like to give a GIANORMUS THANK-YOU to all the folks who came out to whack *Wisteria*. We whacked for over two hours, liberating many trees, and though it was hard to tell, we did make a very good start. I also set a personal record for the most ticks I have ever had in March—more than 60. I quit counting at 60. I have to admit I had a hard time deciding if I hated the ticks more than the *Wisteria*!

More thanks to all of you who have volunteered to help out in the office. This is a HUGE help to us—THANKS!
(Scott Hartley)

The Great Backyard Bird Count

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count took place February 13–16, 2009. Ninety-two checklists were submitted from our local area. Below is a report of the number of checklists, the number of species seen, and the two species with the highest count, in order:

Aberdeen: 3 checklists, 24 species - Blue Jay (24) and Carolina Wren (22)
Carthage: 7 checklists, 40 species - Pine Siskin (65) and Canada Goose (42)
Pinehurst: 42 checklists, 62 species - Pine Siskin (476) and American Robin (298)
Sanford: 9 checklists, 35 species - American Robin (307) and American Goldfinch (44)
Southern Pines: 10 checklists, 36 species - American Robin (83) and American Crow (26)
West End: 8 checklists, 51 species - American Robin (158) and American Goldfinch (69)
Whispering Pines: 7 checklists, 38 species - American Robin (102) and American Black Duck (40)
Vass: 6 checklists, 40 species - Chipping Sparrow (18) and American Goldfinch (16)

If you want more information, go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc and click on Results.

Eagle Cam

Here's a link to see live video of a family of eagles in Oklahoma: www.suttoncenter.org/eaglecam.html. It's well worth checking out!

Interesting Sightings:

Up to eight Wood Ducks have been feeding on corn at Reservoir Park alongside the Mallards adjacent to the dock. This probably will not last after their young hatch—which is likely in a few weeks.

Although Pine Siskins have been abundant at feeds this winter, Purple Finches have been few and far between. A handsome adult male appeared at the Campbell's sunflower feeder for a day in January.

We hope to have some good news to report from Thagard Lake in Whispering Pines in a few months. An Osprey platform was recently erected in one of the shallow coves. It was built by lakeside resident volunteers with wood donated by McDonald Brothers. Ospreys have been seen around the lake well into early summer for the last few years. Now that there is an adequate nesting spot, perhaps a pair will settle in and nest. (Susan Campbell)

Animal and Plant Happenings:

Giant Yucca Skippers are flying at my house. If you're interested in seeing them let me know. Here are a few butterflies flying now that you can see: Tiger Swallowtail, Spicebush Swallowtail, Zebra Swallowtail, Orange Sulphur, Sleepy Orange, Falcate Orangetip, Brown Elfin, Henry's Elfin, Spring Azure, Eastern Tailed Blue, American Lady, and Gemmed Satyr. Look for them nectaring on Blueberry, Huckleberry, Trailing Arbutus, and Horse Sugar.

Dwarf Witch Alder, Choke Cherry, Serviceberry, Bird's-Foot Violet are conspicuous bloomers now. Sandhills Lily leaves are starting to poke up and fiddleheads of Cinnamon Fern are abundant in the drains.

Recent bird arrivals: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Prothonotary Warbler, Chuck-will's-widow, Whip-poor-will, Hummingbirds, and Eastern Kingbirds! Guess they all could be Easter birds. (Scott Hartley)

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

SNHS Board of Directors 2009:

President	Brady Beck	beck.kb@gmail.com
Immediate Past President	David McCloy	david.mccloy@ncmail.net
Vice President	Michael McCloy	prothonotarywarbler@hotmail.com
Member-at-Large	Alicia Jackson	agjackson1@earthlink.net
Secretary	Kerry Brust	kbrust@sandhillsecological.org
Treasurer	Carol Bowman	cbowman6@nc.rr.com
Membership	Chris Norkus	ccnorkus56@embarqmail.com
Newsletter	Linda Jones	candljones@msn.com
Website	Susan Miller	susan@cheslar.com
Field Trips	Scott Hartley	scott.hartley@ncmail.net
	Jeff Beane	jeff.beane@ncmail.net
Merchandise	David Kilpatrick	snhslogo@mac.com



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.