

SANDHILLS NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2006

January 2006 Meeting

January 24, 2006!, 7 p.m.: Hawaiian Birds. Come island-hopping with Kerry Brust and Jessie Schillaci to learn about Hawaiian forest birds, seabirds and other wildlife as they share their experiences in a naturalist's tropical paradise. *Dress in your brightest tropical clothing—if we can't be there, we can pretend right?*

***The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at Penick Village (E. Rhode Island Ave. Extension, Southern Pines; phone 692-0300 for directions).

Future Meetings

Feb 28—Winter-Breeding Amphibians of the North Carolina Sandhills: Jeff Beane of the NC State Museum of Natural Sciences will present an overview of winter-breeding amphibians of the Sandhills region.

March 28—TBA

April 25—Fungus Among Us: Dr. Brian Akers from St. Andrews College will be our speaker. Brian is an enthusiastic speaker and will give us an overview of mushroom life cycles, identification and other natural history information.

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.

January 6—Stargazing 101: Learn to orient yourself using the north star, locate several of the 88 “official” constellations and hear some cool facts, myths and legends. Meet at the Weymouth Center parking area on Conn. Ave., (across from the Campbell House), at 7 p.m.

January 14—Really Long Field Trip Pungo NWR: Meet Scott at Weymouth Woods SNP at 6 a.m. for this all day trip. We will carpool. The roads are dirt and can be tricky or impassable if we have a lot of rain. If this is the case we will alter our plans and bird the area around Pettigrew State Park or Lake Mattamuskeet. We will see huge flocks of snow geese, tundra swans and other waterfowl. Bald eagles, harriers and other raptors are seen frequently. Black bear are often seen and there is always the chance for a red wolf. **This area is very remote. Restroom facilities at the refuge maintenance area may not be available.** Bring lunch, water, snacks and warm clothing. The driving time one way is 3.5 to 4 hours. Will stop for fast food on the way back. We hope to be back by circa 10:30 p.m.

February 11—Field Trip Huntington Beach State Park: Meet at Weymouth Woods SNP at 6 a.m. for this all day trip. Bob Perkins is the trip leader and will meet us at Huntington Beach. Folks can meet at Weymouth to carpool. Scott Hartley is planning on going and can lead folks on the 3 hour drive. An ocean inlet/jetty, salt marshes and freshwater wetlands all located in such a small area produce great birds. This trip will require 3+ miles walking in sand to the jetty/inlet area. The effort should be well worth the effort to see purple sandpipers, sea ducks, hopefully alcids, etc.

March 4—Winter Amphibians: Join trip leader Jeff Beane—herp guy and all-around naturalist—for an all-day tour to some unique wetland habitats to look for winter amphibians, including rare species like tiger and Mabee's salamanders and Carolina gopher frog. Jeff plans to visit several sites in Scotland, Hoke, and Robeson Counties. Bring lunch and hip boots or waders. Meet at Town and Country Shopping Center at 9:00 a.m. We'll return at around 5 or 6 p.m. and can have dinner at Mesquite Baja afterward (if the group wishes). **Limit 8 people.**

April TBA—Spring Wildflowers: Join Bruce Sorrie, botanist extraordinaire, for a trip to Raven Rock State Park. Bruce has been working on the county inventory for Harnett County and has spent a lot of time at Raven Rock. This area has rich flood plains and a wide variety of spring wildflowers including many rare species. The birds and butterflies should be quite good at this time as well.

Special Event—make reservations as soon as possible!

Saturday, February 4 at 7 p.m., Museum of Natural Sciences Special Event! Bobby Harrison on Rediscovering the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

In February 2004, Bobby Harrison became one of only three people to officially sight the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, thus rediscovering this Holy Grail of birding once believed to be extinct. Now you have the opportunity to hear Bobby's story first hand. Order your tickets now (\$10 for Wake County Audubon members; \$15 for the general public) for this exclusive event; limited seating available! Call the Friends of the Museum of Natural Sciences at (919) 733-7450 x307 to reserve your tickets.

From the President's Desk: Susan Campbell

New President Elect

At our December election, voting took place for only one position. David McCloy was elected to the newly created position of President Elect. All other positions (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) will be maintained by the current officers. As of next month, David will be assisting Susan Campbell (President) and the Board during 2006. He will then become President of the organization in 2006. Congratulations David!

Southern Pines Christmas Bird Count

Despite very cold and wet weather on December 18th, our Christmas Bird Count was a big success. Over thirty volunteers counted a record total of 102 species in the Southern Pines circle. Highlights included a Lesser White-fronted Goose and two Snow Geese (one blue phase and one white phase) mixed in with Canada Geese up near Union Pines High School. Also a Spotted

Sandpiper and a Merlin turned up at Woodlake. And the Irvin's yard once again produced Rufous Hummingbird for us—not one but two females have been using their feeders for several weeks now. We will also be including two count week species seen by Susan Campbell in Whispering Pines: Fish Crow (two birds along Pine Ridge Drive) and Northern Shoveler (one young male mixed in with the Mallards on Spring Valley Lake). A big thank you to all of the volunteers who made the count a success--and to Kerry Brust who graciously hosted our count-down get together at Sandhills Ecological Institute.

Woodlake Trip

On December 10, Scott Hartley led a birding group comprised of 7 people to Woodlake, near Vass. Several members of the newly-formed Woodlake Bird Club met us up there, and we ended up with a fair-sized group for the morning.

We started off the day shivering, for it was several degrees below freezing and the ground was covered by frost. But the birds didn't seem to mind, as they were active from the start. Our first stop was the peninsula beside the main clubhouse, and we had a decent view of a large raft of waterfowl, mainly comprised of American Coots, Ruddy Ducks, Canvasback, Bufflehead, and Ring-necked Ducks, and Canada Geese. Across from the clubhouse there was a juvenile Cooper's Hawk perched at about eye level on a pole, and it let us get to within about 50 feet, giving us an excellent view.

We then went to the north side residential section of the lake, where we saw an adult Bald Eagle trying, without much luck, to catch a meal of Pied-billed Grebe. There were also two juvenile eagles nearby. There was also a sprinkling of waterfowl in the north side, including Canvasback, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Duck, American Coot, Bufflehead, and Hooded Merganser. We also observed a variety of winter songbirds, which included Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Dark-eyed Juncos.

From there we made our way to the peninsula on the south side of the lake, where we observed several Horned Grebes, a distant Common Loon, and a fly-by Belted Kingfisher. We also observed a Winter Wren skulking in a hedgerow as we walked up the peninsula.

Despite the chilly start to the day, we ended up with 52 total species and had a fun time. Many thanks to Scott Hartley for leading the trip, and to the Woodlake Bird Club for providing refreshments for us in the Clubhouse.

Michael McCloy

Annual Dues

Dues for 2006 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. If your mailing label shows a "0", you haven't paid for this year. If it shows "1" or "2", you've paid for one or two persons for the year.

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

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR WITH THESE FIELD TRIPS

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January 6—Stargazing
January 14—Pungo National Wildlife Refuge
February 11—Huntington Beach State Park
March 4—Winter Amphibians/Scotland, Hoke, Robeson Counties
April TBA—Spring Wildflowers
For details, see page 1 and 2.

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