



Handing Over the Baton

The assistance, cooperation, and encouragement of everyone made my tenure as SNHS President in 2007 a distinct pleasure. Great speakers and field trips and enthusiastic Board support contributed greatly to our organization growing this past year. My best wishes to President Brady Beck and the new Board as they take over in 2008.

David McCloy

Special Event

The following is an excerpt from the write-up submitted to the Carolina Bird Club for their next newsletter. If you would like to lend a hand either before or during the meeting, please contact Susan Campbell at susan@ncaves.com or 910 949-3207. We still need a few folks to stuff meeting packets a few days prior to the meeting, to man an information table at the hotel during the weekend, and to donate refreshments for our special welcome event at Weymouth Woods.

Spring in the Carolina Sandhills

The Carolina Bird Club will be returning to Southern Pines for the 2008 spring meeting May 2-4. Spring will be well under way by the time the meeting takes place. Resident species such as Brown-headed Nuthatches, Eastern Bluebirds, and Chipping Sparrows will already be on eggs. Most of the migrants such as Chuck-will's-widows, Kentucky Warblers, and Grasshopper Sparrows will have returned and be establishing territories. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers will no doubt be active around their cavity trees, feeding young of the year. Given that recovery efforts on behalf of this endangered species have been so successful, it is unlikely anyone will walk away from the weekend without seeing at least one family group!

Field trips will feature some of the most popular destinations like Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve, Sandhills Game Land, Hobby Field (Scissor-tailed Flycatchers), and Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge; as well as Nature Conservancy's Long Valley Farm, Woodlake, and the privately owned Raft Swamp Farm. Our Friday evening speaker will be Jeff Marcus, a biologist with the NC Wildlife Commission. Jeff will present a summary of the research and conservation initiatives underway on the Sandhills Game Land and will discuss restoration efforts that have been so successful on state lands in the region. Saturday evening, buffet dinner will be followed by our Annual Meeting and then a program by biologist and internationally renowned local photographer, Todd Pusser. Todd contributes to *Wildlife in North Carolina* magazine, and has an extensive background in natural history of our area. Todd will show a variety of wildlife images taken here in the Sandhills.

Meeting headquarters will be at the Days Inn, which is now under new ownership (was Holiday Inn) and has been thoroughly renovated. Rooms are \$64 per night plus 9.75% tax. If you're going to stay at the hotel during the CBC meeting, be sure to make your reservations before April 7th.

2008 Meetings

- Monday, January 28** Gary Perlmutter – Lichens. This program will focus on lichen ecology, identification, and species of lichen found in our area.
- Monday, February 26** Mike Dunn – Yellowstone. Take a closer look at Yellowstone through the eyes of educator and nature photographer, Mike Dunn. Mike has been leading summer and winter educator workshops to Yellowstone for over 12 years.
- Monday, March 24** Jeff Marcus – Bachman's Sparrow. Learn more about the "Pine Woods Sparrow." Jeff will highlight the research being done in the Sandhills Gamelands.
- Monday, April 28** Lisa Fields – The Wildlife, People, and Culture of St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. Lisa is a biologist with Jay Carter and Associates. She worked on St. Lawrence Island studying alcids and lived with the Yupik Eskimos.
- Monday, May 19** Bruce Sorrie – Photographic Tour. This will be a tour of Bruce's 40-plus years of taking pictures from all over the world.
- Monday, June 23** Jeff Beane - Bog Turtles. Discover the natural history of our smallest turtle. This rare, diminutive turtle is about four inches long and inhabits spring-fed wetlands in our Mountains and western Piedmont.

Meeting Times: 7:00 p.m. - Fellowship & 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 19** **Pungo** - Leave at 6 a.m. from Wal-Mart for a long, all-day trip to the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Pungo usually has the largest wintering flocks of Snow Geese and Tundra Swans on the East Coast, with flocks of over 40,000 Snow Geese and several thousand Tundra Swans. We should see a good variety of ducks, raptors, and land birds. Black Bear, Red Wolf, and other mammals are always possible. Bring lunch. Restrooms may not be available. We will stop for fast food on the return trip. Return to Southern Pines by 9:30 p.m.ish. The estimated driving time is 3½ hours each

way. Contact Scott Hartley for more information – 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

March 8 **Stargazing 101** - Meet at Weymouth Woods at 7 p.m.. The program will be held in the Boyd Meadow. We will focus on learning how to locate and identify the most visible constellations as well as some myths and legends concerning them. Bring a chair or blanket, and dress for the weather. Binoculars will aid in viewing a couple of objects, but are not necessary. Contact Scott Hartley for more information – 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

March 29 **Spring Odonates** - Learn to identify spring damselflies and dragonflies. We will walk about two miles. Meet at Weymouth Woods at 2 p.m. Leader: Scott Hartley – 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

April 19 8 a.m. **Bird Walk** - Join us to look for spring migrants on a two-mile walk. Meet at 8 a.m. at Weymouth Woods. Leader: Scott Hartley – 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

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

Southern Pines Christmas Bird Count

The Southern Pines Christmas Count was held Sunday, December 16th and--despite the weather--we did quite well! Thirty-four people in 13 separate parties (not including another six feeder watchers) managed to turn up 98 species. We added several species later in the afternoon that were not noted at our lunchtime meeting (i.e., Northern Bobwhite, Fish Crow, Cooper's Hawk, Gray Catbird). Highlights included "Cackling" Goose (the smallest subspecies of Canada Goose), Spotted Sandpiper, Lincoln's Sparrow, and, hold on to your hats: Common Redpoll! Susan Campbell found a male mixed in with a large group of Juncos (40-50 birds). They were all foraging on the edge of the dam at the north end of Flyrod Lake here in Whispering Pines. This spot is not far from a yard with several feeders. Unfortunately, efforts to relocate the flock later in the day were unsuccessful.

We also had two species of hummingbird: one Rufous (female) and two Ruby-throateds (immature males). The Rufous (in Southern Pines) and one of the Ruby-throateds (in Whispering Pines) showed up at feeders not long before the count. The other Ruby-throated (in Southern Pines) had been **around** awhile but never was seen using a feeder. He was foraging an extensive array of late-blooming *Salvias*, unaffected by the weather.

Our waterfowl numbers were down, perhaps as a result of less *Hydrilla* on Lake Surf (Woodlake) more so than the weather. We missed Merlin, Wild Turkey, Baltimore Oriole, and Common Yellowthroat--all of which had become quite regular on this count.

But all in all, a very good effort!!

Trip Reports

Stargazing 101 October 26

The trip on the 26th was rained out and was rescheduled for Nov 12. There were two intrepid participants. We learned to use the north star as a starting point for locating the bright stars in about 12 constellations. We covered some basic star information. There are only 88 official constellations and my goal is to have a stargazing program at least every other month to learn at least 50 of them.
(Scott Hartley)

Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge November 17, 2007 (The Day My Birdwatching Got Rusty)

On a very cold Saturday morning, the Sandhills Natural History Society set out from its usual meeting place at the Aberdeen Wal-Mart, heading for Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Anson County. This was the time of the year for observing winter sparrows, so we got the usual share of Song (the most numerous), White-throated, Chipping, Swamp, and Field sparrows, but in my mind, the sparrow of the day was a Savannah Sparrow. A Savannah's brownish stripes against the background of his snow-white chest makes this bird a standout. Other observations that day were a flock of American Robins (over 200) flying overhead, about a hundred Common Grackles in the trees, some Brown-headed Nuthatches singing from their beloved coniferous perches, and a Pine Siskin on the wing that Michael McCloy was able to identify simply by its call. I would have counted it a life bird if I had gotten a better look, but hopefully I will be getting that better look soon. There also seemed to be quite a lot of Red-headed Woodpeckers, including an immature that gave us quite a show. But the best find of all was a flock of Rusty Blackbirds that Michael discovered on the ground under the trees where the grackles were hanging out. After a few hours of birding the refuge, we went to Gaddys Mill Pond on private property. There was a veritable museum of classic cars – Ford Mustangs and Torinos and Chevrolet Corvettes—but our purpose was the observation of the landowner's pond, which had hundreds of Canada Geese. The enigma of that site, however, was a duck that proved to be a challenging identification. And the combination of “duck” and “challenging identification” usually means that it's a hybrid. It's always a good thing to have expert birders with you to help out with these challenges. That's what makes birding so fun!
(Patrick Shaffner)

Woodlake Bird Walk December 8

Thirteen SNHS members and one guest joined trip leader Scott Hartley for the annual field trip to Woodlake. The weather was most cooperative – starting out at 36 degrees, but warming up to 62 degrees. A total of 53 species were seen, including Canada Goose, Mallard, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper feeding along the dam, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, American Pipit, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

There were two highlights. One was an adult eagle sitting in a tree eating a very large fish. But the second was the most interesting—a Loggerhead Shrike perched in a thorn bush with breakfast—a small bird, species unknown—impaled on a nearby thorn bush with its head and upper body already consumed. I urge you to go to our website (www.sandhillsnature.org) and check out Michael McCloy's awesome pictures!! (Michael McCloy/Linda Jones)

Spontaneous Winter Hummingbird Field Trip January 5

A small group of SNHS members joined Susan Campbell for a morning of hummingbird trapping in Moore County. Carol Bowman, Brady Beck, and Michael McCloy met at John and Leslie Watschke's in Southern Pines where Susan trapped a beautiful immature female Rufous Hummingbird. Michael did the honors of trapping, and both he and Brady took lots of photos during the banding, weighing, and measuring process. In a matter of minutes, the hummer was back on her way, sporting a shiny new bracelet. The whole group then proceeded to Marjorie Ludwig's to recapture the adult female Rufous that Susan originally banded at her feeder as an immature in February of 2007. Michael was able to trap Rufous Hummingbird number two in very short order. This little gal appears very healthy and is noticeably more colorful this year, with red-brown feathers on her flanks, under her tail, on her rump, and along the side of her face. She also has a very large spot of coppery colored feathers in the center of her gorget, typical of adult female of this species.

Susan shared winter hummingbird identification tips as well as feeder and cold-weather feeding information. Many thanks for the Watschkes and Ludwigs for opening their homes, sharing their hummingbirds, and also providing some yummy refreshments to the group.

From the President's Desk: Brady Beck

Well, another year has come and gone, and thanks to the hard work of our dedicated members, it was a very successful one for the Society. There were lots of great field trips and outings, and all of the meetings were interesting and informative. As the new President of the SNHS, I hope to help continue the momentum created over the past few years. The new Board will continue to work to keep the meetings and outings lively and educational. We will be tackling some changes to the Society web site that will help with communication and membership list upkeep. We will also continue to offer a variety of items bearing the SNHS logo.

We are also going to add a few photographs by Society members to each newsletter, and we will also allow space in the newsletter for notable wildlife or natural history related sightings. So, if you have any interesting photos you would like to add to the newsletter and share with other members, send them to me and Michael and I will select a couple of images for each newsletter. We will start things off in the first newsletter of 2008 with some photos we have taken at one of the most recent Society projects, the new bird feeding station at Weymouth Woods.

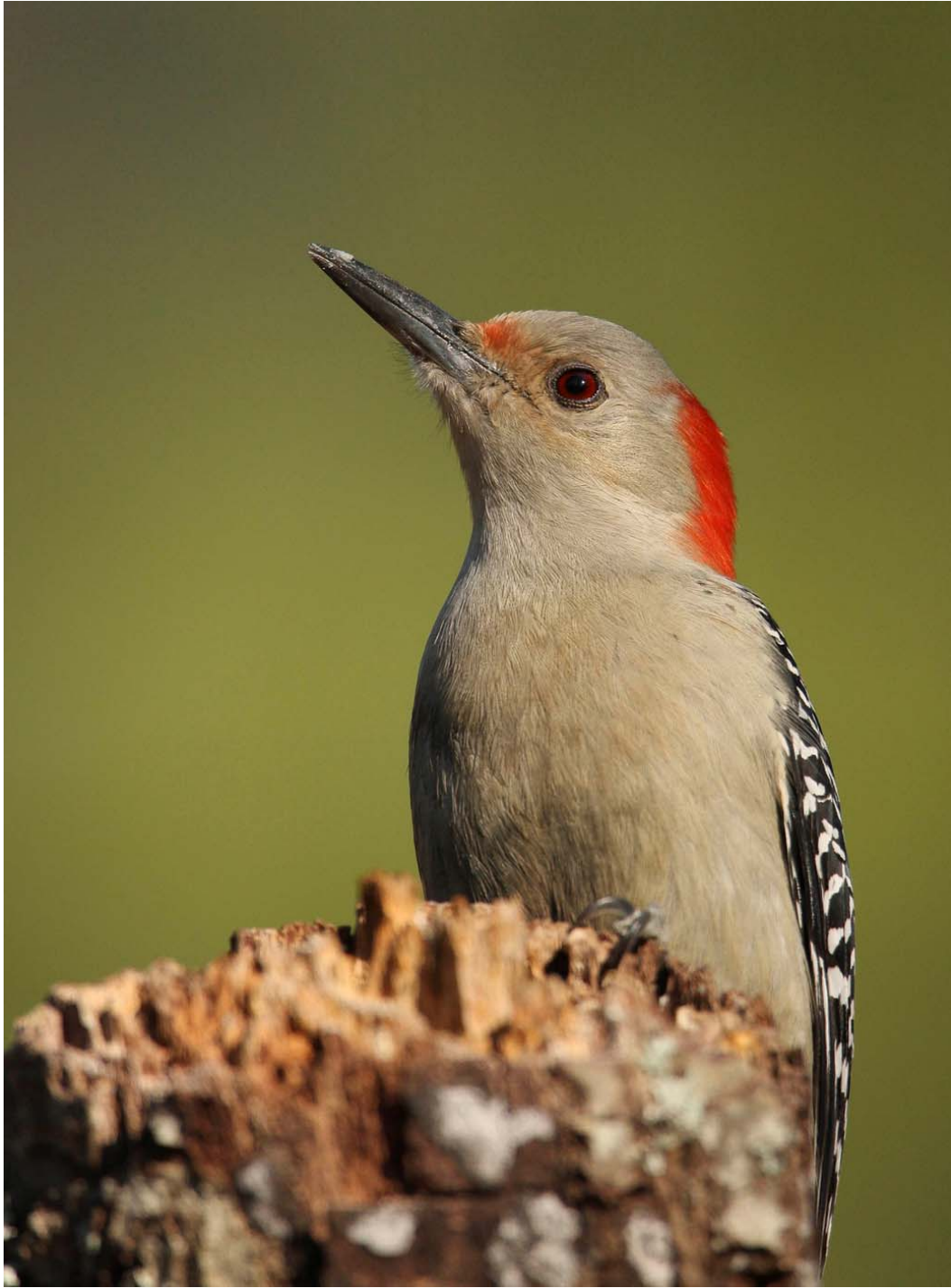
The feeding station was started with generous donations from Wild Birds Unlimited, Susan Campbell, and Scott Hartley, at the end of 2007. The station is located behind the breezeway between the Auditorium and the main Office. The purpose of the station is to allow close observation of local birds by birdwatchers and visitors to the Park as well as to provide photographic opportunities. It will allow Park staff to incorporate the station into their programs and also provide a convenient location to demonstrate bird banding. The current setup consists of a tube feeder (being used by Brown-headed Nuthatches and Juncos), a suet feeder (Pine Warblers, White-breasted

Nuthatches), a suet-stuffed oak snag (Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Juncos, and Pine Warbler), and a thistle feeder (no users yet). We would love for Society members to help keep the feeders full with donations of suet/peanut butter and seed and possibly even a bird bath. We'll create a feeder record book to be kept behind the Park desk for folks to make observations. Contact me if you have further questions about feeding needs. Congratulations to our new Board members! You'll find them listed at the end of this newsletter.

Photography Spotlight



Brown headed nuthatch photographed by Michael McCloy ©2007



Red-bellied Woodpecker on suet snag at WEWO, Photographed by Brady Beck © 2008

Of This and That.....

Happy New Year, SNHS Members!!

Interesting Birds:

An adult male Baltimore Oriole returned to the Campbells' feeder in Whispering Pines during the cold spell right after New Year's. In less than a week, he was followed by a second. The first male was recognized by the band on his right leg—no doubt one of the two banded in the yard last February. 'Righty' quickly became a regular at the feeder outside the office window. Oriole number two, as luck would have it, is also banded: on the left leg! So it looks like both 'Righty' and 'Lefty' are back to take advantage of winter handouts for awhile. And it seemed just one of these guys returning this winter would be a long shot! Wow.



Baltimore Oriole Photographed by Brady Beck ©2008

The Campbells have an Orange-crowned Warbler at the homemade peanut butter-suet mix regularly as well. If you know the bird's chip note, you can find him foraging in the bushes and understory in the vicinity of the yard most of the day. He may well be the same bird that spent a number of weeks late last winter feeding on lard and suet alongside the Pine Warblers and Yellow-rumps.

Congratulations to Michael McCloy. Michael was awarded second place in his age group in the *Wildlife in North Carolina* 2007 Photo Competition for a super picture of an Eastern Hognose Snake. He also received Honorable Mention for a picture of a Green Treefrog. You can see more of Michael's photographic skill at our website – www.sandhillsnature.org.

Club Donation. The SNHS has donated \$330.00 to the Carolina Bird Club to be used for the CBC challenge grant to support the Piedmont Trail Guide. Two hundred dollars was from the treasury and the rest was raised by a pass of the hat at the October meeting.

Support Letter Sent. The following is an excerpt from the letter of support that was sent to Mr. D. Brian Collier, Foundation of the Carolinas, by David V. McCloy, Ph.D., President, Sandhills Natural History Society, on October 29, 2007:

The Sandhills Natural History Society (SNHS), by unanimous vote at its October monthly meeting, voices its strong support for the acquisition of the Diggs Tract by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). This tract is in southern Richmond County, North Carolina, and is currently owned by Progress Energy but administered by the NCWRC. Progress Energy intends to sell the Diggs Tract and NCWRC is a prime contender as a buyer. We hope that the Cole Foundation will assist NCWRC with grant funding in its proposed purchase of this property. The NCWRC would assure continued public access at this tract to the Pee Dee River that could be lost with another purchaser.

Used Bird Feeders Program. Birdie's on Broad Street in downtown Southern Pines will be offering something special to the community during the month of February. Bring in your old feeder, purchase a new feeder and receive 25% off! Any and all good used feeders will be given to schools, nursing homes, nature centers, and parks to allow others to enjoy the joys of feeding and watching wild birds.

Birdie's on Broad Street is located at 220 NW Broad Street, on the theater block in downtown Southern Pines. If you are working with any agencies or schools that may be interested in receiving a good used bird feeder and participating in this program, please contact Donna Hefton at Birdie's on Broad Street, 695-4264. We hope to spread the joy of birding to everyone!

Great Backyard Bird Count February 15-18. Once again it's time to start thinking about the GBBC. The theme for this year's GBBC is "Count for Fun, Count for the Future!" While the event is certainly enjoyable, it also generates information that can be used to promote conservation, so we can all enjoy our favorite birds far into the future. As you may recall, the 2007 GBBC smashed an all-time record, with more than 81,000 checklists submitted. We'd certainly like to meet or exceed that level in 2008. If you'd like more information about how to participate in the GBBC, go to www.birdcount.org/howto.html.

General Reminder – 2008 Dues. Our push to collect 2008 dues is underway. Half of our 130 members have paid their dues for 2008. For those who have not paid 2008 dues yet, please mail your check for \$5 per person, 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. You may also bring your dues to the first meeting of the year on January 28th.

Fledging Birders

We, as birders, have a responsibility for conserving our winged wonders. The Fledging Birders Program (www.fledgingbirders.org) is working toward future bird conservation by helping new birders develop their own understanding of birds and the issues that threaten them. The Fledging Birders approach integrates educational theories and birding knowledge to effectively spark the appreciation of birding in others at their own pace.

By introducing children to the excitement of birding, we can affect a bit of change for the kids, the birds, and the birding community as a whole. With this in mind, the Fledging Birders program has developed the Schoolyard Birding Challenge (www.fledgingbirders.org/challenge.html). The objective of the challenge is quite direct. Cooperating teachers take their students out to look for birds on their school grounds. They keep track of the birds found each month and submit a checklist via the website at the end of the given month (think School-Yard List).

The Schoolyard Birding Challenge is limited to school grounds to highlight bird diversity and accessibility. Even the most urban of schools can get 10-20 species of birds. This may not seem like much by our birder standards. However, kids looking at birds for the first time are almost always surprised, if not flat out impressed, by their local avidiversity regardless of how limited it may be.

For Jan-May 2008, National Biodiversity Parks (NBP) and Fledging Birders (the contest sponsors) have announced that the likes of Wild Birds Unlimited, the Kenn Kaufman Nature Site, the Ohio Young Birders Club, Houghton Mifflin, and *Wild Bird* magazine have contributed prizes/incentives for the contest. Through their support, NBP has been able to develop three different "grade level" divisions for the monthly contest with prize packages for the winning school in EACH division! PLUS, the overall winner each month also gets an AUTOGRAPHED copy of the *Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America!!*

In addition, NBP/Fledging Birders will also be giving additional Window Cafe bird feeders (thanks to Wild Birds Unlimited) each month. ALL participating schools will be entered into drawings for these random feeder prizes!!

As birders, it would also be in our own best interest to spread the word. If more people (especially kids) become endeared with birding, more of the public will become interested in bird and conservation issues. How can birders help?

1) Share it with everyone and anyone that works in education. Tell your teacher friends. Tell your children's (grandchildren's?) teachers. Chat with your local school principal. If you need ammunition to justify their devotion of class time to birds, use the following article that highlights a few of the benefits of birding for students: www.njea.org/pdfs/Review_Oct2007.pdf.

2) Offer to become a coach or sponsor for your child's (grandchild, niece, neighbor, local school) class. You could either be a resource for the teacher or do activities/walks with the kids. Maybe after-school groups?

3) Talk about it with friends that live in other towns or states. They can bring it to their local teachers and schools.

If you have any questions about the Fledging Birder Program or the Schoolyard Birding Challenge, contact program director Dave Magpiong at www.fledgingbirders@aol.com. (Susan Campbell)

By the way, the contest is FREE for all schools!

Birding's Most Sedentary Event – *Bird Watcher's Digest* “Big Sit.” SNHS will participate in this event next year! Check out the website at www.birdwatchersdigest.com. Recommend a Big Sit location to a Board Member.

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 Birdie's on Broad, 220 NW Broad Street, Southern Pines, and at Wild Birds Unlimited, near Harris Teeter, Route 1, Aberdeen. SNHS members enjoy a 10% discount at Birdie's and a 5% discount at WBU. Thanks to Birdie's owner, Donna Hefton, and WBU's owner, Bill Kastern, for supporting our club! Contact Kerry at 910-528-6958 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 2008:

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	Terry Sharpe	sharpetl@etinternet.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	slm@cheslar.com
Field Trips	Scott Hartley	scott.hartley@ncmail.net
	Jeff Beane	jeff.beane@ncmail.net



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

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.