

# SANDHILLS NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER  
OCTOBER 2005

## Upcoming Programs and Speakers

*October 25, 7 p.m.: Special Event—Ghost Stories.* Join us for cider/cookies and some fine storytelling/ghost stories.

If you have a good story to tell contact us so we can start a speaker list.

*November 22, 7 p.m.: Snakes.* Dave Woodward will update on his research on northern pine snakes in the Sandhills.

Live snakes will be displayed.

*December 2, 7 p.m.: Pot Luck Social.* Bring a favorite dish and an item or brief topic to share with the group.

*January 24, 2006!, 7 p.m.: Hawaiian Birds.* Join Kerry Brust and Jessie Schillaci for a program on the the birdlife of this tropical paradise. DRESS IN YOUR BRIGHTEST TROPICAL CLOTHING. If we can't be there we can pretend right?

## 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.**

*November 12—Ft. Fisher:* Meet at Weymouth Woods at 6 a.m. for the 2.5 hour ride to Ft. Fisher. This is always a fun trip with a lot of birding. We will check for ducks and waders at the small lake at Carolina Beach on the way to Ft. Fisher. At Ft. Fisher we will head to the "Basin"/ferry terminal area, have lunch at the ferry terminal, and then check the ocean across from the Ft. Fisher Historic Site. Depending on weather, bird activity, and the group we may bird Carolina Beach State Park and Greenfield Lake in Wilmington. This will be an all day trip with a return to Southern Pines by 7 p.m. Bring lunch, bug spray, and sun screen.

*December 10—Woodlake:* Meet at Weymouth Woods at 7 a.m. for this short day trip to search for waterfowl, eagles and land birds.

*January TBA—Pungo National Wildlife Refuge:* Meet at Weymouth Woods 5:30 a.m. for a very long all day trip to Pungo. This will afford a great opportunity to see a wide variety of wildlife. Expect to see thousands of snow geese and tundra swans, lots of other waterfowl, raptors and land birds. Black bears are frequently seen, fox and bobcat are occasionally seen and red wolves are a possibility. The sunset over the south side of Lake Pungo with thousands of swans and snow geese is well worth the long drive. Expect to return to Southern Pines by 10 p.m.-ish. Bring lunch/snacks and money to buy breakfast and supper. This refuge is quite remote and restroom facilities at the refuge maintenance area may or may not be available. Porta Johns may be available.

*February TBA—Huntington Beach State Park:* Bob Perkins will lead a trip at a date to be determined. This is about 3.5 hour drive to a excellent birding spot. The combination of ocean, jetties, marsh and forest in a small area produce great birding. Loons and purple sandpipers are often seen around the rock jetty. Scoters, eiders, and alcids are possibilities.

## From the President's Desk: Susan Campbell

### *Interesting sightings:*

Rex Badgett had 12 Mississippi Kites foraging overhead in mid-August in Laurinburg in the area of the Heritage and Oakly housing developments.

The Schultzes in Pinewild had a Selasphorus (Rufous-type) hummingbird at their feeder for about a week in late September.

A very early Ruby-crowned Kinglet was found in a mist net at Weymouth Woods on September 28th.

Alicia Jackson reported that the first Pied-billed Grebe returned to Powell's Pond (her 'backyard') in Aberdeen on October 2nd.

### *Wings Over Water:*

It's not too late to make plans to attend the annual Celebration of Wildlife and Wildlands in Eastern North Carolina from November 1 through 6. A wide variety of trips are available for people of all ages. There are field trips, workshops and interpretive programs in a wide variety of settings. For details, contact Susan Campbell or visit [www.wingsoverwater.org](http://www.wingsoverwater.org).

### *Fall migration:*

Banding is underway at Weymouth Woods. So far we have caught 19 species: Acadian Flycatcher, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, White-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Northern Cardinal, and Indigo Bunting.

Many thanks to volunteers Kelley Anderson, Brady Beck, Carol Bowman, David McCloy and Michael McCloy for their invaluable assistance. We plan to continue morning banding along James Creek through October to gather more information on late migrants as well as the arrival of our wintering birds.

## **New Books and Somewhat New Books at Weymouth Woods SNP: Scott Hartley**

### Birds:

Two books that have been around for a few years and that I recently acquired for the park are *A Photographic Guide To North American Raptors* by Brian K. Wheeler & William S. Clark, 1995, and *Raptors of Eastern North America* by Brian K. Wheeler, 2003. The latter book is larger and contains detailed information on identification and photos while the former contains more photos and less text, making it very useful in the field. I'd highly recommend both of these books as they will help with learning more about field identification of birds in just about every imaginable plumage, race and subspecies.

### Insects:

*Field Guide To Grasshoppers, Katydid, and Crickets of the United States* by John L. Capinera, Ralph D. Scott, and Thomas J. Walker. 2004. Finally a field guide to a beautiful conspicuous group of overlooked insects. Excellent natural history information, easy-to-use keys, illustrations and color plates will help you identify about a third of the orthopterans found in the US. Will this lead us to add Orthopteran counts to our list of counts?

*Caterpillars of Eastern North America* by John Wagner. An awesome book with incredible color photos and concise text on Lepidoptera caterpillars. The author covers more than 700 species that occur in our area and in most cases has a photo of the adult—pinned specimen—next to the caterpillar. Tips on finding, collecting, rearing and photographing these creatures are given.

*Caterpillars in the Field and Garden* by Thomas J. Allen, Jim P. Brock and Jeffery Glassberg. 2005. Another very good book that covers only butterfly caterpillars. It treats nearly all North American species with over 900 color photos as well as tips on finding, raising, photographing and gardening.

*Butterflies of the East Coast* by Rick Cech and Guy Tudor. 2005. A large format reference book with one full page for each species. Each account includes a large photo of dorsal and ventral surfaces, a paragraph of interesting facts and anecdotes, unusual behavior etc., followed by information on identification, habitat, host plant (a nice photo), occurrence and ecology. Be sure to read the account for Early Hairstreak. Someone you know is mentioned there! Rick Cech has been here and got several photos for the book here at Weymouth and other Sandhills locations.

## **Trip to Sandhills Turf, Inc.**

On Saturday, September 3, Carol Bowman, David McCloy, Michael McCloy, Susan Strine, Pru Williams, and Linda Jones, all from the Sandhills Natural History Society, went on an informal, spur of the moment birding outing to Sandhills Turf Inc, on the Montgomery/Moore County line. Thankfully, the weather cooperated with us the whole morning, allowing us to see a good variety of bird and butterfly species.

We arrived at the sod farm around 7:30 AM and were greeted by a Red-tailed Hawk posing on a telephone pole about 50 feet in front of us. Past the hawk along the western edge of the main service road there were numerous Field and Chipping Sparrows, Eastern Bluebirds, and even a few Warblers, which included two juvenile Prairie, several Pine Warblers, and a dull, olive-grayish warbler, possibly an immature female Cape May, but it didn't stay put long enough for us to get a definite ID on it. We then branched off onto a northwesterly service road past a pond, which hosted a beautiful Green Heron. Then we headed east along another service road, which is where we saw numerous Killdeer, and a medium sized flock of Horned Lark. It was getting about mid-morning now, so we went to

the northern property boundary of the farm and explored some of the clear-cuts and wildlife plantings. We saw lots of butterflies there, including Monarch, Gulf Fritillary, Fritillary spp., Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Azure spp., and various Sulphur spp

Here is the complete list of bird species in alphabetical order: American Crow 9, American Goldfinch 3, Barn Swallow 3, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 3, Blue Grosbeak 3, Canada Goose 21, Carolina Chickadee 2, Carolina Wren 4, Chipping Sparrow 4, Common Yellowthroat 1, Downy Woodpecker 1, Eastern Bluebird 14, Eastern Kingbird 1, Eastern Towhee 4, Eastern Wood-Pewee 1, European Starling 87, Field Sparrow 2, Green Heron 1, Horned Lark 13, House Finch 1, Killdeer 42, Mourning Dove 44, Northern Cardinal 2, Northern Mockingbird 1, Pine Warbler 3, Prairie Warbler 2, Red-tailed Hawk 3, Ruby-throated Hummingbird 1, Tufted Titmouse 2, Turkey Vulture 2

It was a fairly quiet but entertaining day out, and everybody that was along had fun. We should thank the Harris family (co-owners) for giving us permission to bird the farm.—Michael McCloy

### Swift Night Out

On Saturday, September 10, Scott Hartley led a group of approximately 15 people from the SHNS to Southern Pines Elementary School to watch a miracle of bird migration—hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of Chimney Swifts roosting in one chimney at dusk. When we got to the roost we saw several swifts coming in, but we waited until about 7:30 PM and hundreds started pouring in out of the sky from all directions. At around 7:45, they started to actually fly down into the chimney to roost for the night. Watching about a hundred swifts dive down a chimney at roughly the same time is quite a sight to see! After the last straggler had flew into his roost, we estimated around 600 swifts seen that night. This truly is one of the many miracles of the avian world!—Michael McCloy

### Swift Facts

Swifts belong to the family *Apodidae*. *Apodidae* is Latin from the Greek *apodus* which means without feet. Swifts do have tiny weak feet and in fact cannot perch or walk. They have stiff modified tail feathers which aid in clinging to the inside of chimney's and other rough interior surfaces.

Chimney Swifts are cooperative breeders and may have one or more helper birds, usually first-summer non-breeders.

Chimney Swifts use saliva to glue their nests to the inside of chimneys, under eaves, in hollow trees etc.. One species of swiftlet builds its nest entirely of saliva. These nest are highly sought by natives to sell for birds nest soup, a delicacy in parts of Asia. In 1989 19,900,000 swiftlet nest were traded globally. They are sold for as much as \$1,1225 per kilogram.

It is thought that swift saliva may be used in the development of AIDS treatments as a way to promote cell division in the immune system.

### Aquatic Outing

Kerry Brust led a fun outing at Weymouth Woods on Saturday, September 17. The participants included Kerry Brust, Scott Hartley, Brady Beck, John Kappes, Jeff Marcus (w/ Emma and Abby), David McCloy, Michael McCloy, and Bob Perkins

The group used seines and dip nets to sample the beaver pond above Moccasin Crossing—no moccasins were observed. Here's a list of what we found. Thanks Kerry and John.

Vertebrates included Pirate Perch (*Aphredoderus sayanus*), *Notropis* sp. (*cummingsae* or *chalybaeus*), either ironcolor or dusky shiner, Red-fin Pickerel (*Esox americanus*), Sawcheek Darter (*Etheostoma serrifer*), *Etheostoma* sp. (probably an additional species of darter—possibly swamp), Mud Sunfish (*Acanthacarchus pomotis*), and Dwarf waterdog (*Necturus punctatus*).

Invertebrates included dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, water boatmen, back swimmer, water strider, whirligig beetle, and crayfish.

### Upcoming Christmas Counts

The Raven Rock Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 17. If you can participate, contact Paul Hart at Raven Rock State Park at [Paul.Hart@ncmail.net](mailto:Paul.Hart@ncmail.net) or call the park office.

The Southern Pines Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Sunday, December 18. If you can spend a day or a half day counting, contact Susan Campbell at [susan@ncaves.com](mailto:susan@ncaves.com).

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 ACTIVITIES

#### **FIELD TRIPS**

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For details, see page 1.

#### **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. 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.