

# New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter



Volume 34, Number 1: January-February 2009

## Mason Farm Field Trip Report

by Lily Truemper and Tom Driscoll



On November 16, 2008, I led a bird walk to the Highway 54 (Little Creek) Impoundment and then to Mason Farm. Joining me was our own Linda Gaines (the field trip chairperson), Herbert Struemper, and his 6 year-old daughter Lily. We had a great time and saw about 35 species of birds. Linda took some great photos and a few of her favorites are included on this page. One of the more pleasant surprises is that Lily called the names of most of the birds before I said anything. She was amazing. Apparently, she has read and memorized much of the U.S. bird guide book! In addition, she wanted to write her thoughts on the bird walk.

Lily writes:

Tom and Linda went on a bird walk with me. At first I saw two

bluebirds. I tried to look at them with my binoculars, but they flew away. Then Tom saw a redheaded wood-pecker. After that Linda saw a Northern Flicker. Those were my favorite birds. Tom brought a telescope and lifted me up to look through it. I like the telescope because I could see things very close. I also saw a red-winged blackbird with the scope.

Then Tom said we are going to go to Mason's Farm. At Mason's farm we saw a kinglet, a mocking bird, and a cardinal. Then Tom said it's time to go and we went home for hot chocolate and cake.

Sadly, I didn't get any of the cake or hot chocolate, but I had a wonderful time. I hope you can join us for one of our upcoming field trips.



## Bird Seed Sale Not Up To Par This Year by Judy Murray

The birdseed sale this year was not as successful as years past, but I want to thank all of you who ordered seed — without you there would be no sale. Also thanks to those of you who solicited friends and relatives and produced multiple orders. As you may know, the proceeds of this sale go to: education in the form of elementary classroom instruction, part of newsletter printing costs, expenses of street festivals where we try to get the word out about the Audubon Society, and to birds and environmental issues in general. We only netted \$2,280.00 this year which is about \$1,000 less our average over the years. We can always hope for a better economic situation next year. I would like to offer a special thank you to Cynthia Fox of Wild Bird Center who has graciously supported us with this sale for the past four years. Also many thanks to Norm Budnitz, Tom Driscoll, Martha Girolami, Bo Howes, and Pam Timmons who helped with delivering seed and loading cars on the day of pickup.

## Feeder Watch

by Tom Driscoll

As the days get colder and shorter, birds are eating more and I have to refill feeders more frequently. For the past month or so, the feeding had abated some, but now the birds including the winter visitors are eating a lot! One of my readers sent me a message asking where her birds were hiding. During the late



summer and early fall, there is usually a lot of food around and less birds (the winter visitors have not arrived and the summer visitors have begun migration) are here, so there may be less activity at your feeders.

Are your birds eating more now? Have your winter visitors all arrived yet? Some of the less common birds I have seen in my yard include Pine Siskins, Brown Creepers, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Be on the lookout for these unusual birds. There are also a few Baltimore Orioles wintering in our area. I also have some birds, such as Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers and Brown Creepers eating my suet. If you don't provide suet for your birds because the squirrels eat it, consider using the hot pepper suet. My squirrels avoid it! Sometimes, orioles and other birds will eat jelly, so you may want to consider putting out some jelly or using an oriole feeder. Some of the local bird food stores, such as the Wild Bird Center in Chapel Hill can show you these feeders. If you see one of the rare birds or want to recount another feeder story, then please contact me at [btdriscoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:btdriscoll@bellsouth.net) would like to include some reader's bird feeding observations and stories, so please send me some.

Although you may have been feeding more birds, are you providing them with water? Most winters can be somewhat dry here. Your birds may be having trouble finding water. To ensure that they continue to come to your feeders, adding a water bath or tray would be very helpful to your birds.

## January & February 2009 Membership Programs

We have exciting programs set for the New Hope Audubon Society's January and February 2009 membership meetings. On January, 8, 2009 (please note that this is not on the first Thursday in January like most of our meeting dates), Kenny Gay ( a geologist for the State of North Carolina) will discuss Gemstones of North Carolina. He spoke last year about the topography of our area. His presentation was well-received. We look forward to having him speak to us again! On February 5, 2009, Reggie Daves will speak to us about the Birds of New Zealand. Hopefully, we will see photos of Kiwis and other exotic birds of the Southern Hemisphere.

Remember, we meet at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens' Totten Center on the first Thursday (usually) of each month, September through May. The meetings start at 7 p.m. with refreshments and greetings followed by some Audubon chapter business. The speakers usually begin around 7:45 p.m. and last for an hour or so. Currently, the botanical gardens are constructing a new building in the former parking lot for the Totten Center. There is limited parking there, but there is additional parking behind the Totten Center. Go to the next traffic light on Hwy. 15-501 and turn left. Turn left at the first stop sign, and then turn left on a new road that leads to the back of the Totten Center. I look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings. All, including non-members, are welcome!!

## Eagle Count Coordinator



Lontime New Hope Audubon Society member Martha Girolami has agreed to take over the position of Eagle Count Coordinator. Please extend your thanks to Martha for taking over this important position. We look forward to Martha continuing the work of Stewart Pearce and all of the many volunteers who have made this a signature program of New Hope Audubon.

We also thank Steart Pearce for his many dedicated service in this position.

## Try Out the New Trail at Johnston Mill Nature Preserves

If you need a spot to recover from all of your holiday activities, drop by Triangle Land Conservancy's Johnston Mill Nature Preserve. Volunteers from TLC constructed a new trail that ties in to the existing trail system. The new trail offers a 2-mile loop traversing forests, fields and floodplains, highlights of the trail include beautiful views from the rigeline overlooking Old Field Creek and the new Earl Fowler bridge made from red cedar harvested and milled onsite.



Johnson Mill Nature Preserve is part of the North Carolina Birsding Trail. Please see the NC Birding Trail website for more information. <http://www.ncbirdingtrail.org/default.asp>

# In Search of the Red Cockaded Woodpecker

by Bo Howes

As many of you know, the Red-cockaded Woodpecker can be difficult to find, given its dwindling habitat and shy demeanor. This summer while on vacation at Emerald Isle I had the opportunity to visit one of the few sites where one can reliably locate a colony of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. The Patsy Pond Nature Trail, managed by the North Carolina Coastal Federation in Carteret County is a 2.5 mile trail winding through a Long Leaf Pine forest. These forests used to dominate the eastern part of North Carolina and are the only habitat wherein the Red-cockaded Woodpecker will thrive.

On the second day of my vacation, my aunt Nancy and I set out to see if we could spot the elusive woodpecker. We were rewarded early and often as the Red-cockaded Woodpeckers flitted about and generally made themselves at home. These woodpeckers were decidedly unconcerned with our presence. In fact we reached that uncomfortable birding point where one has seen enough of a bird, but cannot quite bring oneself to say, "enough" and move on. Here we were with a bird neither of us had seen before and now we just move on? Fortunately, a pair of Northern Bobwhites began to call nearby and with a clean conscience we went in search of the bobwhites.

My parents were also vacationing with us at Emerald Isle. My mother had seen Red-cockaded Woodpeckers on this site before, but my father had never seen the bird here or anywhere. Dad has walked the Patsy Pond Nature Trail at least a dozen times looking for the bird but had always returned disappointed. Given my experience the day before, I gushed about the bird's prevalence and conspicuous nature. I may even have allowed as how it was so simple to see the Red-cockaded that anyone could do it and perhaps had just not been paying attention.

And full of such bravado I set out with my parents the next day to locate the bird. Of course, you know what happened next. Where the bird had been the day before...nothing. We wandered through the Long Leaf pines, further up the trail each step one step closer to the end of the trail and still no Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Red-headed Woodpeckers abounded. Even the Northern Bobwhite made an appearance. We congratulated ourselves on seeing the Bobwhite as my Aunt and I had not been able to put eyes on one the day before. We commented on how the Bobwhite was once common but neither of us could remember the last time we saw one in the wild. Yet the object of our affection avoided us like we carried some pestilence before us.

Now as many of you know, my father had a rather massive heart attack last January. Fortunately, he has recovered beautifully. But thoughts of human mortality kept crowding in as we walked the trail. Would this bird elude him again? Were my confident statements about the abundance of this bird going to haunt me like a long gone Carolina Parakeet? Had I upset the birding Karma by questioning another's powers of observation? These thoughts passed through my head as I exchanged nervous glances with my mother.

At long last, we heard the scrabbling of a woodpecker on a tree. We looked up and there it was, Red-cockaded at last. Of course, after we saw the first one more showed up and we stood there looking at them. Ooing and ahing over the white cheek. Looking for the red "cockade". Oh, what a bird. Then we again reached the uncomfortable birding point, now where is that Northern Bobwhite?

## New Hope Audubon Society Activities Calendar

Saturday Jan. 3 **Bird Walk** to Local Hot Spot with Cynthia Fox, owner of Wild Bird Center in Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill. Meet at the store at 7:55 a.m. and return to the store by 10:00 a.m. Carpools leave from the store.

Thursday Jan 8 **Membership Meeting at NC Botanical Gardens.** Speaker – Kenny Gay – Gemstones of North Carolina 7:00 p.m.

Saturday Jan 10. **Stream Watch** with John Kent. 9:00 a.m.

Sunday Jan. 13. Tom Driscoll will lead a **Bird Walk** at the Butner Game lands. We will look for winter birds, such as sparrows, raptors, and ducks. Meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at 1 p.m. We plan to be out 2 to 3 hours. Bring boots and good walking shoes and water. Please contact Tom Driscoll at [btdriscoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:btdriscoll@bellsouth.net) if you have questions or plan to attend.

Thursday Feb 5 **Membership Meeting at NC Botanical Gardens.** Speaker Reggie Daves – Birds of New Zealand. 7:00 p.m.

Saturday Feb. 7. **Stream Watch** with John Kent. 9:00 a.m.

Sunday Feb. 8. Tom Driscoll will lead a **Bird Walk** at a destination to be announced. We will wait to see what birds are being seen in the local area. Meet at the Mardi Gras Bowling Alley parking lot at 1 p.m. We plan to be out 2 to 3 hours. Bring boots and good walking shoes and water. Please contact Tom Driscoll at [btdriscoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:btdriscoll@bellsouth.net) if you have questions or plan to attend.

## New Hope Audubon Society 2008-2009 Officers

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