

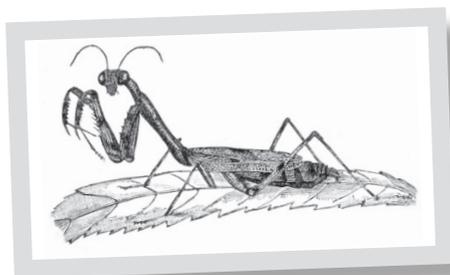
New Hope Audubon Society Newsletter



Volume 34, Number 5: September-October 2009

A Triangle Natural Almanac: Carolina Mantis

by Patrick Coin

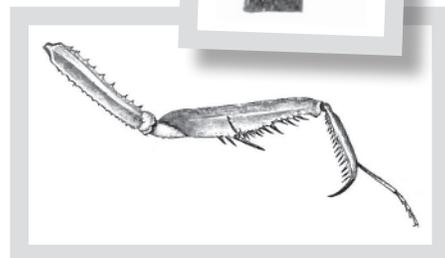


Most gardeners are familiar with the introduced Asian mantis, *Tenodera aridifolia*. The presence of this large, aggressive, species is often revealed by patches of shredded butterfly wings scattered on the ground below a flower. The native Carolina mantis, *Stagmomantis carolina*, may be found occasionally in similar situations. At two and one-half inches it is smaller than the four-inch Asian mantis. While the Asian mantis has a bold green-and-brown pattern, the Carolina mantis is clothed in a

camouflage pattern of green or mottled gray-brown. Females have plump abdomens and very short wings, so are incapable of flight. Males are smaller, with trim bodies and full-length wings, allowing them to disperse in search of prey and mates. A curious feature of the camouflage is a ragged hole in each forewing. This resembles a worn spot in a rotting leaf. Remarkably, this hole is not due to wear, but is a consistent feature of an undamaged wing. Like others of its family, the Carolina mantis has raptorial forelegs that help it snag prey.

Though they resemble grasshoppers to some extent, mantids are members of the insect order Dictyoptera, which also includes (surprise!) cockroaches. In our area, the Carolina mantis is the only native member of the mantid family. The species is found throughout the Southeast and ranges to Arizona and through Mexico and Central America. It seems likely that it has suffered due to competition with introduced mantis species, but it is still fairly common throughout its range. (The Asian species and others were introduced in the 19th century as a biological control agent for garden pests, but their benefit is dubious, as they do not differentiate between pests and beneficial species, such as pollinators.)

Look for the Carolina mantis in garden areas and old fields with flowers. Males are attracted to lighted buildings. They are noted from late summer until the first frost—I have seen them as late as November in Durham. You may also find the distinctive elongated egg masses of this species on the stems of woody plants through the winter. (Those of the Asian mantis are similar, but shorter and wider.) For more information on the Carolina mantis, see bugguide.net.



Handy reminder to cut out and put on your refrigerator.

DON'T FORGET!!!

**Pick up your New Hope Audubon Society BIRD SEED on
SATURDAY, October 24, 2009 from 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
WILD BIRD CENTER, EASTGATE SHOPPING CENTER**

National Nightjar Survey (Yoga) Report for 2009

by Jane Tigar

Now I know why it is so wonderful to participate in the National Nightjar Survey – and it's not because of the joy of hearing a whip-poor-will sing. It was a long (long because we screwed up the timing and arrived over an hour early at our first stop) and late night (late because the moon rose at 9:45 p.m.) monitoring our NHAS-adopted Saxapahaw Route.

We left home at 7:30 in the evening and finished the survey at ten minutes to midnight on a lonely country road. For all that, we didn't hear a single nightjar.

Yet it was a beautiful night and time not just well spent, but time that expanded our lives. We watched a magical and glorious orange moon – just a day past full – rise in a clear sky. Wisps of clouds occasionally painted her face as she brightened to white and rose higher and higher.

At each of our ten stops, we paused for our six-minute survey. When explaining and trying to sell others on adopting a route – this description of ten six-minute stops often sounds flat. I found myself these past two years saying – it sounds like nothing, but it's not nothing. This year, with the help of no nightjars calling, I realized that these ten stops are so fulfilling because they require the kind of focused attention yoga instructors (and I am one) hope their students experience. It's not something you can really teach or be taught, but a good instructor can help create an atmosphere and situation that makes it possible for the experience to arise.

Nightjar Survey periods are, I discovered, provide that perfect setting. There you are on a country road, in the dark, under intense moonlight. Without any conscious effort, the whole body becomes a thousand ears. Barking, trilling, hooting, rustling, squeaking, creaking, gravel crunching, my husband breathing, the click of my pen, the whisper of his voice announcing the end of each minute. A dog barking, wow that's getting louder, oh, it's getting closer and oh "bleep" the dog is running towards us!

Now we are in the car, after all, it's only minute three and the timer is still in Michael's hand and the dog is still barking, but we are safe behind metal doors and the moon roof is open and we are still a thousand ears listening for nightjars, though I wonder whether the sound of my pounding heart elevates the noise level number from 2 (medium) to 3 (excessive).

Ten six-minute meditations in the moonlight, in the country. Whether you hear a nightjar is only the point for the purposes of the Survey paper in your hand. That you hear and that you are here – there's the joy, there's the teaching.

One of our teams who had gone out that same night in Durham, contacted me the next day and said their team heard a few Chucks and Whips – yes, this is another benefit of doing the survey, you get to say things like Chucks and Whips – and might have a re-do and try to get more ... Wait, I said, there's a protocol. If the Whip calls at 6 minutes and 2 seconds, you can't count it. We can't bias the survey in favor of song.

Another teaching: How many times in life do we bias our observation in favor of that which we wish to hear?

A survey night with no calls is no shame. It gives you the right to sling another bit of survey lingo. You can now say "I got blanked." This year both the Saxapahaw team and Mike Wilson, the Survey's maestro at William and Mary College, "got blanked."

This brings us to yet another yogic teaching within the Nightjar Survey: Nothing is something. King Lear had it wrong when he said "Nothing will come of nothing." When Mike read our completed chart of zeros, he wrote: "Thanks for your determination given the quiet night. I actually find these routes the most interesting because they provide clues to why these species are declining. We need both ends of the spectrum."

Bird Seed Sale: It's time for the annual New Hope Audubon Society Bird Seed Sale. We decided not to sell coffee this year. First the basics... Enclosed in **this** issue of your newsletter is an ORDER FORM (see page 7). Remember, the NHAS bird seed sale happens only **once** per year, so order enough seed to last through the entire winter. Fill out the order form and send it WITH A CHECK FOR THE FULL AMOUNT to:

Judy Murray • New Hope Audubon Society Bird Seed Sale • 406 Holly Lane • Chapel Hill NC 27517
Please have those order forms and checks in by OCTOBER 1.

Next, cut out the handy reminder also in this issue of the newsletter and put it on your refrigerator, reminding you to come to Wild Bird Center (Eastgate Shopping Center, Chapel Hill) on **Saturday, October 24, 2009 between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm to PICK UP YOUR ORDER.** A cadre of volunteers will be on hand to help you load your seed into your car.

If you live in Fearington Village, Carolina Meadows or Carol Woods, a smiling NHAS volunteer will DELIVER your order to your door. We also deliver to any elderly or handicapped person – please draw a map to your house and include it with your order form.

New Hope Audubon Society Membership Meeting Presentations for 2009-2010

I am very pleased to announce the presentations for the New Hope Audubon Society membership meetings. We will be hearing and seeing presentations on everything from ticks to minerals and gems. It should be an exciting season and we look forward to seeing you there! Please note that the schedule for the entire "year" is elsewhere in the newsletter. I encourage you to keep the schedule on your refrigerator. The first meeting in September is a pot luck dinner where everyone brings a dish to share. The meeting starts early at 6:30pm and, instead of a formal presentation, we invite everyone to bring 10 or 15 slides or power point pictures to share. The photos or pictures should be about a nature or an environmental topic. It is always interesting to see what everyone has seen or where they have been!

As always, our membership meetings are held at the Totten Center at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens on the first Thursday of every month (except June, July, and August). The gardens are on Highway 15-501 at the intersection of Old Mason Farm Road on the southeast corner. The parking lot is on the southeast corner too. The meetings start at 7pm (please remember that the September meeting is an exception beginning at 6:30 p.m.) with refreshments, chatting with friends, and meeting visitors or new members. There is chapter business at 7:20 or so and the presentations start at approximately 7:45 and run through 9:00. **Everyone, even non-members, is welcome! See you in September!**

I am always looking for speakers or nature/environmental topics. If you have a good nature or environmental presentation, or know of a good speaker or a topic that you would like to hear, then please contact me at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com.

NHAS Speakers for the 2009-2010

DATE	SPEAKER	TOPIC	CONTACT INFO
September 3, 2009	Members	Pot luck dinner and 15 Best Photos/Slides	spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com
October 1, 2009	Jeff Brewer	Mountains-to-the-Sea Trail Status Update	jdbrewer@bellsouth.net
November 5, 2009	Dr. Ron Sutherland	The effects of urbanization on amphibians, reptiles, ground nesting birds, and mesopredator mammals in the Sandhills"	rws10@duke.edu
December 3, 2009	Jeff Marcus	Platte River, NE Sandhill Crane and Least Tern Surveys	jeff.marcus@ncwildlife.org
January 7, 2010	Kenny Gay	Mineralogy of North Carolina: Past, Present, and Future	< kenny.gay@ncdenr.gov >
February 4, 2010	Jeff Pippen	Butterflies and Odonates of North Carolina	jspippen@duke.edu
March 4, 2010	Penny Padgett	Tick Talk: Everything you ever wanted to know about ticks, but were afraid to ask!	pjpadgett@ehs.unc.edu
April 1, 2010	Marcus Simpson	Lost heritage: the early attempts to publish a 'Birds of North Carolina'	marcusb@pol.net
May 6, 2010	Walker Golder	Flora and Fauna of the NC Audubon Coastal Sanctuaries	wgolder@audubon.org

Trip of a Lifetime

Eric “the Ibis” and Michelle “Plover” Scholz took a birdwatching honeymoon.

We left the house on March 15 and returned late at night on May 31, 2009, fifteen thousand miles later. In between, we got married and searched for all sorts of rare and elusive birds.

Our first stop was Brinkley, Arkansas in search of the Ivory Billed Woodpecker. We ate at Gene’s BBQ to find out where to see this woodpecker, but once we arrived at the spot, all we found was a wing, and of a Pileated at that.

We then headed to Austin, where we began to realize just how closely our journey would be cutting the migration routes of our sought-after species. The very week the Golden-cheeked Warbler had arrived at Balcones, we saw it; the very *day* the Black-capped Vireo arrived, we saw it. We then did our first of many zags, back east to the Anahuac Yellow Rail Prairie, where Eric caught a glimpse of the elusive bird. Then we drove down to Laguna Atascosa (after a quick detour to see the Whooping Cranes at Aransas), where we saw Tropical Parula, Masked Duck, and a brilliant pair of Blue Buntings. We left Laguna Atascosa with Aplomado Falcons flying overhead and drove through the South Texas hotspots, where among the other specialty birds we finally saw a Clay-colored Robin (Thrush). Becoming increasingly aware of the broken air conditioner in our car, we soon left Texas for the balmier disposition of southeast Arizona.

Southeast Arizona is a magical place, as every birder knows, and we enjoyed it immensely. Working through the Rare Bird Alert, we found Blue Mockingbird, Black-capped Vireo, Elegant Trogon, Buff-bellied Flycatcher, as well as some hard ones for us like Bendire’s Thrasher and an early Virginia Warbler. We also saw a pair of Rufous-crowned Warblers in the same wash where we waited for a tow truck, and since we were stuck there overnight we also got great looks at Elf and Whiskered Screech-owls.

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Windstorms forced us away to sunny California, where a California Gnatcatcher and a pleasant visit with a friend of mine were the good parts of our detour through Los Angeles. Our quest for the California Condor was scrapped by a mudslide closing Highway 1, so we zipped up Highway 101 to Marin to get married on April 17, stopping a couple times on the way to show Michelle her first west coast birds, plus a remarkably compliant Yellow-billed Loon on Tomales Bay. (Actually, it was not that remarkably compliant, as it had molted its flight feathers.) We didn’t bird much in Marin, as our pre- and post-wedding socializing kept us busy. Occasionally we underwent absurd-hour and fruitless searches for Black Rails. It was bizarrely difficult to find an Oak Titmouse, which we finally found right outside the wedding chapel!

After a seventeen-day stopover in Marin, we headed off to Colorado and the Rockies. Our heater had broken by this time, so it was even more of an adventure than we had planned on. The Gunnison’s Sage Grouse lek was very cold, but we bundled up, and after crisscrossing the state a few times and venturing into Kansas we saw Lesser and Greater Prairie Chickens, Gunnison’s and Greater Sage Grouse, Dusky and the Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Chukars. We hiked to almost 14,000 feet in the snow looking for the White-tailed Ptarmigan, but just missed them.

On our way to Kansas we stopped briefly (by a prison, of all places) to listen to Black Rails, a stop I counseled against due to the rain but Michelle insisted upon. In fact, the inclement weather was the very reason the rails were calling during daylight at all.

After Colorado we drove to Yellowstone for the Trumpeter Swans. We hoped to take the tram up the Grand Tetons to see the Black Rosy-finch but it was still too early in the season. However, we did have a grizzly bear walk within six feet of our car. We also saw White-winged Crossbills, some beautiful Williamson’s Sapsuckers, American Dippers and, best of all, the most stunning ducks in the world, Harlequin Ducks on a wild river.

Leaving frigid Yellowstone, we headed through Montana, hardly stopping because we had no guide book and no target birds. We entered North Dakota at dusk, and next day we awoke to the twittering of Sprague’s Pipits overhead. Nearby, Upland Sandpipers strolled through the tallgrass, and all in all it was postcard-pretty. We set off confidently to find the Baird’s Sparrows but it took a while even to find the refuge entrance. Over the next two days we tracked Baird’s and LeConte’s sparrows through the grass very slowly, trying to get good photographs. They sang all day, but even singing, they are tough to see (unlike the Henslow’s and

Grasshopper Sparrows, which sang up on twigs where one could see them). We saw a flock of Gray Partridges and several Baird's Sandpipers. There are many birds that breed in this prairie pothole region, so we saw many species of ducks and birds like the Black Tern that looked very snazzy in their breeding plumage.

The next day, we were off to Minnesota to look for the Yellow Rail. We heard dozens of them at 2 a.m. but couldn't see them. The spring migration finally caught up with us at the well-named town of Audubon, where there were warblers everywhere. In Duluth we stopped at Park Point, a migration fallout spot that sticks enticingly into Lake Superior, and then drove to the famous Sax Zim Bog, where we found Mourning and Connecticut Warblers and Boreal Chickadees, as well as our missing Bay-breasted Warbler and a nice flock of Bobolinks. To our surprise, our trip list was growing towards 500.



We balanced as best we could between persevering to see hard-to-find birds and impatiently moving on. We had to be back by June, and the season was pushing us along. We rushed down to St. Louis for the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, but the rains were beginning. Beyond the rain was the humidity, and with no defroster navigating was difficult. So we headed for Tennessee, where we saw the lovely Henslow's Sparrow and added a few more birds besides. There was one more bird on our "hit list," the Cerulean Warbler, and the only places I knew to look for it were in North Carolina. So we were almost home, and just in time, too, as the car broke down on the top of Chimney Rock. We decided to come back to the Blue Ridge Parkway another time to see this bird.

We arrived home at a reasonable hour on Sunday night to find, to our surprise, that the house had not been colonized by deer mice, and was in quite good, though dusty, order. We began to unpack, and were amazed at how much stuff we had been able to pack into the car. Realizing that unpacking would take weeks, we quickly retired to bed, spread out in each other's arms.



Adopt-a-Highway Program



Once per quarter, we gather to pick up the trash on the road and the next gathering is scheduled for August 25, 2009 at 7:30am. This is one of the many programs sponsored by the New Hope Audubon Society is our adopt-a-highway program. In this case, we have "adopted" Stagecoach Road which is located

in the southeastern corner of Durham County, near Chatham and Orange Counties. The road is bounded by Ferrington Rd. and Highway 751. This kind of project gives us a lot of visibility and many drivers stop to thank us.

However, we are in danger of discontinuing this program. Fewer and fewer in our Audubon society are participating in picking up the trash, so we need more volunteers. If we do not get more than 6 participants, then we plan to discontinue our adopt-a-highway program. If you are interested

in participating, then please show up at the parking lot along Stagecoach Road or contact me at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com. You'll have fun and make a positive contribution to our environment.

I have trash bags and orange day-glow vests for visibility. I also have "grabbers" that enable one to pick up the trash without too much bending over! Please bring gloves.

Note that I found a \$10 bill during one of our trash pickups.

Feeder Watch

by Tom Driscoll

It's the middle of August now and some birds, especially the young, have moved on and are finding their own territories; more like, the parents have kicked the babies out of their areas! Usually, feeder activity decreases some during the hotter months of the year. However, I am going through more suet and feed than ever. Unfortunately, Fish Crows and Common Grackles have found my feeder. They are eating a lot and forcing the other birds to wait. Have you noticed a "pecking" order at your feeders? At my feeder, the Red-bellied Woodpecker is high in the pecking order, but I noticed recently that the Brown Thrashers will challenge the woodpeckers! The grackles are very aggressive at defending the feeders; so are the Mourning Doves. I have also noticed

that many of my feeder birds have “learned” to eat suet. In addition to the Eastern Bluebirds, American Robins and Brown Thrashers eat suet now. I have also seen Pine Warblers eating suet. What birds are eating your suet?

Because our regular brand of peanut butter suet easily melts, we are using a “no melt” kind with hot pepper that appears to be just as tasty to the birds. Last year, I reported that we put a suet feeder on a tree because the squirrels don’t bother the hot pepper suet. However, the crows



Our hummingbirds are still here and defending the feeders. Did you notice that there didn’t seem to be as many hummingbirds this year? Are they still feeding at your house? You can start looking for “odd” hummingbirds now. Several in the Carolinas have reported seeing Rufous Hummingbirds already. We have several types of western U.S. hummingbirds every winter, but some start migrating earlier.

Some babies are still being fed and we can hear them whining for food. Have you noticed how different they look,

compared to their parents? Also, now and in the next two months, some of our backyard birds will be molting. That is, they will be shedding their old feathers and growing in new feathers. In some cases, the birds look unhealthy, and even bald (such as the bald headed cardinals), but they can still fly and forage for food. If you want to report interesting bird observations or have questions, please contact me at spttdrdshnk@yahoo.com and I will answer your question in this column. Keep birding!

Lake Jordan Bald Eagle Count

July 12, 2009

by Martha Girolami

We counted 25 eagles on Lake Jordan in July. There were eleven adults and eleven immatures and 2 indeterminate eagles. There were five sites counted by 10 people. The day was warm, sunny with some haze and breeze. The next count by NHAS is on Sunday, October 11, 2009 from 7 to 8:30 am. We would love to add new counters. So if you would like to join up with someone to see if you like this kind of bird watching, please call Martha Girolami at 919-362-5759 or email me at mgirolami@mac.com. Or talk any NHAS board member who can help you connect with a counting group.

New Hope Audubon Society Activities Calendar

Thursday Sept 3 **Membership Meeting** at NC Botanical Gardens – Pot luck and slides at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday Sept 5 **Stream Watch** with John Kent at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday Sept 12 **Bird Walk at Duke Gardens** with Cynthia Fox. Meet at Gardens parking lot at 7:55 a.m.

Thursday Oct 1 **Membership Meeting** at NC Botanical Gardens 7:00 p.m. Speaker Jeff Brewer “Mountains-to-the-Sea Trail Status Update”

Saturday Oct 3 **Stream Watch** with John Kent at 9:00 a.m.

Saturday Oct 3 **Bird Walk at Duke Gardens** with Cynthia Fox. Meet at Gardens parking lot at 7:55 a.m.

Saturday Oct 17 **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.

Saturday October 24 **Birdseed Sale Pickup** 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. at the Wild Bird Center at Eastgate Shopping Center

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