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lunches at the Manor House parking lot, where a number of us were lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, when a female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker flew into a nearby Sugar Maple. The great thing about this bird is that she was color-banded, and we were able to identify her as one of our study birds from last year – here she was, in the same area as the year before. We spent that afternoon enjoying great scope views of birds at the Valle Crucis Community Park, including Baltimore Oriole, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo, Willow and Least Flycatcher, and a hummingbird on her nest.

Sunday morning we headed up to the Snake/Rich mountain pass in search of Golden-winged Warblers, which we saw in addition to a pair of Ravens chasing a Red-tail and two male American Redstarts having a territorial dispute. As we were gathering to leave, a Pileated Woodpecker flew overhead. After this, Curtis

took us to some fields on a hillside where we eaked out some scoped views, in the breeze, of Bobolink, Savannah and Grasshopper sparrows. We ate lunch up the Blue Ridge Parkway, at Jeffress Park. We then headed to the well-known region just north of there for Cerulean Warbler. Here we did get great looks, even in the spotting scope, of this species, and found another hummingbird nest.

In the end, we tallied a total of 91 species that were seen or heard. We heard a few things that we did not see, like Kentucky Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Carolina Wren. But the real highlights of this trip were the many birds we were able to put into the spotting scopes, affording some rather spectacular views of birds for all the participants involved.

Jerry, Becky, Curtis and I look forward to more such trips in the future. And we want to thank the “gang” for being such an enthusiastic, energetic lot!

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Mission Statement: “To foster knowledge, appreciation, and enjoyment of nature; to encourage responsible environmental stewardship; to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity.”

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July 2006

Wingbeats

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Thinking Inside the Box: Birdcam Records Lives of Titmice in Apex

by Paul and Austin Murray

Ever wonder what goes on inside a birdhouse?

My son, Austin, and I were wondering too. This year we decided to find out for ourselves by installing a Webcam inside a birdhouse in our backyard. It started off as a science project for the two of us, but we



were so excited and intrigued by what we saw when a pair of Tufted Titmice began building a nest in our birdhouse that we decided to set up a Web site to record the day-to-day activities of this bird family. Each night, we selected the best videos and photos taken during the day and uploaded them to the Web site. Before we knew it, the site became a huge hit on the internet. Thousands of people from all over the world, including birdwatchers,

children, park rangers, and others visited the site and eagerly followed the daily updates.

We, along with all the visitors on the internet, eagerly watched the progression of this Titmouse family over a six-week period, starting from the time they came to the birdhouse “house-hunting” to the eventual fledging of the chicks. It was a

great learning experience for all of us.

The Web site includes a blog where visitors were able to leave comments, ask questions, and provide feedback. Visitors left comments such as:

“I have never seen anything like it. It is awe-inspiring.”

“Amazing! I can’t even describe how seeing this miracle of life makes me feel!”

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Field Trip: Mountain Birding Participants Count 91 Species

Birds, bird-watching enthusiasts, and the North Carolina mountains — what could be better? This is a favorite combination of mine, so it was with much delight and anticipation that on May 19 I joined two co-workers at the Museum of Natural Sciences, Becky Browning and Jerry Reynolds, and 15 eager participants and headed west to the Boone/Blowing Rock area for a special May field trip.

This trip combined the interests and talents of both the Wake Audubon Society and the Museum in a joint trip. Members from both organizations

came along in the Museum’s new 22 passenger “tour bus,” spent Friday and Saturday nights in Boone, and enjoyed the fine birding abilities of NC Audubon mountain biologist Curtis Smalling on Saturday and Sunday morning.

Saturday dawned cloudy and cool, and stayed that way pretty much all day. Our first stop was along Trout Lake, part of the Moses Cone Memorial Park. Here we enjoyed Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Canada and Hooded warblers, among others. We ate our *continued on back page...*

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Wake Audubon Calendar

Join us for these fun and informative upcoming events.

Bird Walk at Anderson Point Saturday, July 8, 8:30 a.m.

Join us for a Saturday morning walk at Wake Audubon's adopted park. Meet in the parking lot at Anderson Point Park. Take Business Highway 64E from the Beltline two miles. Turn right on Rogers Lane (before the grocery store) and right at the stop sign; the parking lot is at the end of Rogers Lane. Contact Melody for more information at 881-2601.

Monthly Meeting — July 11 Triangle Bug Watching

Join environmental engineer, toxicologist, and insect photographer Patrick Coin for a look at some beautiful images of beetles, flies, and other "watchable" insects.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the A-level conference room of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and is open to the public.

Field Trip: Butterflies and Other Insects of the Piedmont Meadows

Saturday, July 15, 10 a.m. - 12
See first hand the triangle bugs Patrick Coin talked about during his presentation at our monthly meeting — Patrick will lead a walk around the meadows of Anderson Point to look for butterflies and other bugs. Meet at the Anderson Point parking lot. Contact Melody for more information at 881-2601.

Some 10,000 pairs of nesting White Ibis are missing from Battery Island off the coast of Wilmington this year. Where are they? Wake Audubon cancelled a planned field trip to the sanctuary because no birds had appeared by June. Look for an article investigating this strange occurrence in next month's issue of *Wingbeats*.

Feathered Facts



House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) — Like the Indigo Bunting, House Wrens will sing their "champagne" song through the hottest day (it's the bubbliest song I know). Its singing is noted in its formal name, 'aedon', which is in reference to Aedon, the daughter of Pandareus, who was changed into a nightingale by the gods (and then to a House Wren, I suppose, thanks to science). Males build "dummy" nests in their territory, and the female chooses one. House wrens are notorious for evicting other cavity-nesting birds from a nest site, puncturing eggs, and even killing nestlings. This seemingly ruthless behavior is just one of many harsh adaptations to a harsh world. If you have a House Wren "problem," try putting up extra boxes in the hopes of providing for all (this does not always work). Our wrens are short-distance migrants, most going to the gulf coast region or Mexico. But, wrens occur all the way to Argentina. Indeed, birds I have seen and heard there look and sound very much like our locals. ~John Gerwin

President's Message Birdathon/Wildathon Totals Are In

Once again, Wake Audubon Vice President Jeff Beane went counting road kill.

Well, among other things.

Wake Audubon's seventh annual Birdathon/Wildathon saw three participating teams this year, and Jeff's team was back once again conducting a 24 hour marathon of all the critters they could count. His self-imposed rules allowed for the counting of greasy spots on the road, as long as they were identifiable. It's this kind of um, shall we say, dedication (and maybe a bit of crazy) that makes the Birdathon/Wildathon one of our most interesting fundraisers.

Long-time member and supporter Karen Bearden takes charge of this fundraiser each year as a participant and as the official species tally keeper. She emailed me in June with preliminary numbers. Here's what she had to say:

"The sighting totals are in, but we're still receiving more money from pledges to add to our grand total. Three teams participated this year, with 12 people taking part in the count. Teams birded in Raleigh and Cary, Max Patch and Lake Julian near Asheville, the Sandhills, and Uwharrie-Pee Dee areas. One hundred twenty one species of birds were counted, including Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Barred Owl, Whip-poor-will, late White-throated Sparrows, newly arrived Orchard Oriole, and

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in the Sandhills. Of course birders are always excited to see warblers, and the three teams saw a total of 22 warbler species, including the colorful Blue-winged and Golden-winged, Canada, and Yellow. Jeff's Wildathon team also counted 14 fishes, 20 amphibians, 33 reptiles, and 12 mammals."

Karen reports that the money pledged should come in around \$2,500, a bit down from previous years but still a respectable and appreciated total. Of course it's not too late to send in a check, and you can contact Karen at chickadeebirders@earthlink.net.

So what do we do with the money raised from the Birdathon/Wildathon? Half of it is donated to Audubon NC's work (with Walker Golder) on the North Carolina Coastal Sanctuaries; the other half goes to Project Bog Turtle and other Wake Audubon projects.

While I'm talking about this, Karen reminds me that we want to thank Donna Hadley at Outdoor Bird Company in the Stonehenge Shopping Center in Raleigh for allowing us to put a Birdathon/Wildathon box in her store for donations during the count period! And of course, thanks to those who counted and to those who donated.

Happy birding!

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"This is better than Animal Planet!"

"Absolutely entrancing to watch."

As we watched these birds, we found answers to the following questions:

How do Titmice build their nests?

What are some of the predators that these birds have to deal with? How do they deal with them?

How do eggs hatch? (We had the awesome experience of witnessing the hatching of one of the chicks.)

What happens to the eggshells? (Hint: they get recycled.)

What challenges do the younger siblings in the brood face? (Competition for food gets quite intense.)

News of Interest

How do birds communicate? (videos on the Web site include audio.)

How do young chicks learn to fly? Do they take practice flights inside the birdhouse?

See for yourself by visiting www.dropshots.com/paulmurray.

The experience of watching this Titmouse family grow is an experience that Austin and I will fondly remember throughout our lives. We will continue to watch birds (using Webcams or otherwise) throughout our lifetimes, and if we decide to share future experiences with the world we will be posting videos on the same Web site. As of this writing, we already had another set of birds checking out the empty box!

Act Locally

Here Comes the Sun! Consider Passive Solar Housing

Have you ever thought about choosing a passive solar house design for your next home? Here are some features of a typical solar home built in Wake County in 1992 by two Wake Audubon members:

Location is ideal for passive solar; the lot is longer in north-south direction, slopes slightly to the south and is located to south of the road to accommodate a house plan with rear solar collectors; no obstructions interfere with solar gain in winter.

Collection of solar energy is achieved by large area of double-glazed windows on south-facing side of house.

Storage of heat is facilitated by insulated, concrete slab-on-grade with heat absorbed and conducted to slab by brick pavers. Great room has concrete block walls that also store heat and buffer temperature fluctuations.

Distribution of heat is facilitated by open plan of principal activity areas, with provision for convective circula-

tion through bedroom. Distribution can be enhanced by use of ceiling fans in great room and running blower of HVAC system continually.

Insulation prevents loss of stored heat in winter and also reduces cooling requirements in summer.

Other solar features:

- double-glazed windows have low emissivity coating to minimize radiant energy losses (with little interference to visible light).
- operable shades (many with reflective coating on outside face) on all windows and skylights help reduce solar gain in summer.
- roof overhang on south side designed to optimize direct solar gain in winter, provide summer shade.
- programmable thermostat permits auxiliary heating and cooling to be scheduled only when needed.
- few windows on east and west sides of house reduce heat loss in winter, minimize solar gain in summer.