

New Volunteer Program to Assist Neuse Riverkeepers, Watershed

In August, 2007, *Wingbeats* featured an article about the Neuse Riverkeepers and their mission to protect waterways in Eastern North Carolina. Now the Muddy Water Watch program, started by Dean Naujoks, the Upper Neuse riverkeeper, is trying to stop damage to the local watershed and bring more awareness of the issue to the public. The program's mission is to monitor construction sites to ensure that builders follow rules that strive to minimize environmental damage from construction site runoff, which consists primarily of sediment.

Sediment, the largest pollutant by volume in North Carolina waterways, is a natural process. But the increased erosion resulting from construction is becoming a real problem in our state. Riverine sediment can bury food sources for fish as well as spawning beds and can make streams more vulnerable to flooding as sediment fills space where water would be.

State inspectors can ensure compliance with sediment production limits, but North Carolina has 32 inspectors to cover about 9,000 construction sites. The Sediment Control Commission, appointed by the governor about 10 years ago, recommended that construction sites be inspected once a month; the actual rate of inspection is much less frequent.

Muddy Water Watch program volunteer monitors will find the source of site runoff at specific construction sites. Without trespassing on private property, they will observe the site from all sides, including condition of current erosion and sediment control measures. They will then fill out a site report and contact the Erosion and Sediment program or DENR. Monitoring and data recording will continue after the initial contact.

Dean Naujoks would like to recruit as many as 50 North Raleigh residents for the Upper Neuse Muddy Water Watch project. Citizens who sign up for project will get training designed to help them recognize violations on construction sites. If you're interested in becoming part of Muddy Water Watch, visit www.neuseriverkeepers.org or call 856-1180.

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January 2008

Wingbeats

Inside:

Bird the N.C. Birding Trail with Wake Audubon! Check out the green box on page 3 for field trip details.

Prothonotary Warbler Named Wake Audubon's 2008 Bird of the Year

Wake Audubon is kicking off 2008 by proclaiming the Prothonotary Warbler our Bird of the Year. In the coming issues of *Wingbeats*, during field trips and walks, and at our meetings, we'll talk more about this special species.

In 1783, the Prothonotary Warbler was named for its bright yellow plumage, which resembles the robes of papal clerks — "prothonotaries" — in the Roman Catholic Church.

Found in the Piedmont and Coastal areas of North Carolina, this handsome neotropical migrant favors flooded wooded areas, such as swamps, especially along rivers. In Raleigh it can be found along the Neuse River at Horseshoe Farm and Anderson Point Parks, as well as some of the swampier areas of the greenway and Lake Raleigh.

Several motives led to the selection of the Prothonotary Warbler as our bird of the year. First, it is on the Audubon watch list because of its slow decline in overall population numbers (although we can also celebrate that the species appears to be increasing across our state). Habitat destruction on both the breeding and wintering grounds is the main threat facing this bird. Second, the bird is a cavity nester, the only eastern wood warbler to do so. Third, the Prothonotary Warbler is one of the most common species found along the Lumber River, Wake Audubon's adopted Important Bird Area — and few species symbolize the majesty of a forested blackwater system like this one. Finally, the bird is a conspicuous species in the areas it is found. The brilliant yellow color, loud ringing song, and relatively outgoing

nature make Prothonotary Warblers easy and delightful to see.

We have a number of events planned to celebrate and educate ourselves about this species. Look for a birdhouse construction day March 1, and a Prothonotary Warbler walk in May to see both the birds and check the status of the houses we've built.

Wake Audubon is cosponsoring the JC Raulston Arboretum Bird House Competition, which is a weekend-long focus on cavity nesting birds. This event, and an associated lecture, should focus even more interest on the Prothonotary Warbler. We plan to have a booth with posters and t-shirts to help get the word out about this fascinating species at the Bird House Competition, as well as at Bugfest, Fiesta del Pueblo, and all the other festivals in which we participate. John Gerwin, our trusted "Feathered Facts" author and Museum of Natural Sciences ornithologist, will write a number of columns for the newsletter with particulars about this bird (look for the first on page 2!). Guests at our monthly meetings will also hear fun facts presented by bird experts.

Of course, be sure to check out our Prothonotary Warbler Web page, filled with great photos and information about this bird as well as a free download of a flapping Prothonotary Warbler cursor.

We look forward to a great year of learning about the Prothonotary Warbler. As its song would suggest, it will be very "sweet, SWEET, SWEET!"

~Becky Desjardins

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Wake Audubon Calendar

Join us for these fun and informative upcoming events.

Monthly Meeting

A State Amphibian? What Should it Be? Why Does it Matter?

Tuesday, Jan. 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Should North Carolina's official state amphibian be a common, familiar species, or one depicting our state's uniquely rich amphibian diversity? You can have a say. Museum of Natural Sciences herpetology curator Jeff Beane will outline some of the choices.

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.

Leader's Choice Bird Walk

Walk Around Lake Johnson Park

Saturday, Jan. 12 at 8:30 a.m.

Join Beth Hawkins for perfect opportunity for children of all ages to feed the Canada Geese, American Coots, and other waterfowl. Plus, this trip may also afford participants a chance to see the Great Egret hanging

out by the lake this winter. Be sure to bring your bag of stale bread! Contact Beth at 835-2650 or beth.hawkins@gmail.com.

IBA Monitoring

Winter Migrants in the IBA Weekend of Jan. 12-13

Join us for this bird census-taking trip to the Lumber River IBA. Hotel or camping reservations can be made for the Friday night prior, or participants can drive down early on Saturday morning. Our group receives a discount at the Comfort Inn in Lumberton, 910-739-4800.

The counts themselves will be conducted on Saturday and Sunday. Similar counting trips will be offered in each of the four seasons this year, and we hope that all Wake Audubon members will participate on at least one of the four times. Contact John Little at jlittle17@nc.rr.com or 919-781-0829 for more information or to participate.

Please see the opposite page for details on January's field trip.

Feathered Facts



Black-capped Petrels (*Pterodroma hasitata*)

—Black-capped Petrels — long thought extinct until David Wingate discovered breeding populations in mountains of southeast Haiti in 1961 — formerly bred on a number of Caribbean islands, but were extirpated by humans and/or introduced mongoose for food. Only four sites are known to host breeding birds: one site in eastern Cuba, two in Haiti, and one in west Dominican Republic — most above 5,000 feet. Once common, it appears many fewer than 10,000 birds remain. Many feed off the coast of North Carolina, in deep water,

which is approximately 1,000 miles from Haiti. They feed on squid, fish, and shrimp, apparently mostly at night or early morning. Little is known about this species, but other petrels lay one egg/year, in the same burrow. Young remain at sea four to five years before returning to breed. Adults live 20+ years. ~John Gerwin

President's Message

Year of the Prothonotary, and Other Things

Happy New Year Wake Audubon members, and welcome to the Year of all things Prothonotary. Why feature one specific bird when we love them all? Each year we will feature a different bird, learning about its life and habitat through the seasons of the year. In a sense, we hope to see the world through the eyes of one specific bird. We will also feature our bird of the year on some of our field trips and bird walks.

If we wanted to see a Prothonotary Warbler now, we would need to travel south, to Central or South America. Wow, wouldn't that be a great field trip! That will have to be an "armchair birding tour," but we will be going to the Lumber River several times throughout the year, so join us on one of these excursions and you are sure to see (and hear) our bright yellow friends. Look for information on the Prothonotary in our newsletters throughout the coming year — learn with us about what it needs to flourish and how we can help.

Crabtree Creek, the Neuse River as it runs through Horseshoe Farm and Anderson Point Parks, and our IBA on the Lumber River will all be important places to preserve for Prothonotary Warblers when they come north in the spring. In anticipation of their return, we will build nest boxes this winter; look for an announcement of where and when this will happen. The birdhouse building

promises to be a fun day for the entire family. Our birdhouses probably won't win any awards, but you never know. We will be participating once again in the Raleigh News and Observer's Birdhouse Contest Weekend with an informational talk and booth, and maybe this year with an entry in the contest.

A big "thanks" to all of the volunteers who pulled weeds, gave talks, worked booths at festivals, and supported the Wildathon. We had a very active year. Thanks to the many, many Wake Audubon members who showed their support for Raleigh's nature parks. We made a difference, and we will keep working to ensure that these parks have environmental stewardship plans for the future. We had a huge response to the Audubon Adventures program, with a record number of requests from teachers and a fantastic response of donations from members (not too late to send your donation in — \$45 sponsors a classroom). Keep up your efforts to recycle more, and to conserve water and our other natural resources. Please send me your suggestions for things that Wake Audubon could do to be more environmentally responsible or to make our organization more meaningful to you.

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centers, they're more than engaging and educational science activities for young people and adults; they're a way to contribute to the conservation of birds and habitat nationwide."

Field Trip

Sites Along the North Carolina Birding Trail Weekend of Jan. 25-27

The southern Piedmont has great birding locations and this trip will explore some of the lesser known sites on the N.C. Birding Trail. We'll have a guided trip to the Pee Dee NWR and spend time at the Pee Dee Game Lands at Blewett Falls Dam. We'll also see several other Trail sites in the local area.

Rooms are being held at the Days Inn in Wadesboro. A double room is \$74.58 per night and includes a continental breakfast. The trip is limited to 12 participants and reservations must be made by Jan. 8. For details and to make your reservation, contact Lena at 571-0388 or lena_gallitano@ncsu.edu.

Act Locally

Water Usage: Reminders for Conservation

Did you know...? The average toilet flush uses three gallons of water. Machine washing clothes uses 18 to 40 gallons of water per load. Washing dishes in a dishwasher uses about 20 gallons of water per load, while hand washing uses about five (when comparing, consider that a hand washed "load" is generally smaller than a machine washed "load.").

Washing your hands, face, or brushing your teeth just once can use as much as a gallon of water. A nice warm, relaxing bathtub full of

water is about 50 gallons of water! An average shower uses about two gallons of water per minute.

Here are a few water conservation suggestions: Use a rain barrel. Don't water your lawn. Use mulch. Install energy efficient washers, low flow showerheads, or water efficient toilets. Use dish/clothes washers only when full. Use a broom instead of a hose to clean driveway and sidewalks. Fix leaks and drips. In short, don't waste, use less, recycle more.