

President's Message

I am very pleased and excited to be the new president of Wake Audubon. I look forward to a year filled with fun events, interesting lectures, amazing field trips, and lots and lots of Purple Martins.

I starting bird watching as a kid. My parents bribed my brother and me to look for birds rather than fight in the backseat of the car on long road trips. I studied geology at Guilford College in Greensboro but changed to ornithology thanks to an enthusiastic mentor in school and a series of engaging bird field jobs. For the past ten years I have worked at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, currently as Bird Collection Manager.

Please introduce yourself to me at a meeting or field trip. I'm admittedly bad with names (unless you are a bird), but I look forward to getting to know you. It's going to be a great year!

Becky

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 13-16

The 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will take place February 15-18, 2009.

People of all ages and experience levels can count birds from wherever they are. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. Then enter your tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count website www.birdsource.org.

These reports create a real-time picture of where birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on more than 500 bird species, visit www.birdsource.org.

Wake Audubon Officers 2009

President: Becky Desjardins

Vice-President: Jeff Beane

Treasurer: John Gerwin

Secretary: Linda Rudd

Mission: *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.*

Wake Audubon Membership (includes membership to National Audubon)

Send this coupon and a check for \$20 annual dues to: National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 12452, Raleigh, NC 27605.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Chapter Code R-55 7XCH; Wake Audubon, Raleigh, NC. Please allow 4-6 weeks for arrival of first issue of *Audubon* magazine.

Wingbeats is published monthly by the Wake Audubon Society and is distributed to the membership of the society.

Newsletter material should be submitted to the editors in written form, either electronically or as hard copy.

Wingbeats prefers original articles, but occasionally items from other sources may be

reprinted or summarized.

Views and opinions expressed in Wingbeats represent those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the editor, the society, or its board of directors.

Copyright 2009 by Wake Audubon Society. Material in this newsletter may be reprinted with permission of the editors.

Printed on 70% recycled paper using soy inks. Please recycle.



January 2009

Wingbeats

Inside:

Great field trips, a message from WA's new president, and more!

Change You Can Believe In

Greetings and Happy New Year. Your Wake Audubon Board made some New Year's resolutions during our November and December board meetings. We think we've made "changes you can believe in."

We have some new board members (and some really old ones but that's another story) and some folks in new positions. Please welcome Becky Desjardins as our new president. I will be trying my hand as treasurer, but only because I share close quarters with a real accountant! With campaign finance reform in full swing, you'll be pleased to know we kept our campaign expenses to the bare minimum (although Becky's been rooting for the Navy football team a lot this fall, so I'm a little suspicious).

Note that many of your board members have new Wake Audubon e-mail addresses, which will consist of the member's first initial and last name, followed by "@wakeaudubon.org". So, for example, Becky's is bdesjardins@wakeaudubon.org and mine is jgerwin@wakeaudubon.org. These are available on our website. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact one of us. Remember, we are here to assist with/encourage your enjoyment of nature, so whether it be a question about membership, birds (sweet!), communications, snakes (eek!)—whatever—please contact one of us.

The costs to print and mail our newsletters have become overwhelming, so we will print only four quarterly newsletters in 2009: January, April, July, and October. We will be sending postcards with program listings for the intervening months. We

will then go all-electronic in 2010. So it is imperative that you begin to provide us with e-mail addresses now. Some of our newsletter folks are looking into a printer-friendly format, so we can be ready at least by 2010 (we hope much sooner of course). Our plan is to send e-mail alerts to members when the current version is posted. Over the past few years, we have paid our printer to address and mail the newsletter, but this process has not worked to get the newsletter into your mailboxes in a timely fashion. We will now be having "mailing parties," generally once a month. This will save us money and (we hope) expedite the process, plus it's a fun way to spend an hour or two with other members. Please sign up with Linda Rudd (lrudd@wakeaudubon.org) if you are interested in helping occasionally.

We have begun sending e-mail reminders to members whose e-mail addresses we have. Again, if you'd like to receive communications, **we need your e-mail address**. Please send it to our e-mail guru, Kari Wouk, at: kwouk@wakeaudubon.org. Kari and Richard Brown (bikerbrowns@juno.com) are handling membership details.

Please visit the website for regular updates. Megan Demers has done a fabulous job of getting us caught up, and we'll be adding more content that we hope will be useful. As we receive updates of changes, they will be posted to our website. If you have something to share with the members, let Megan or one of the board members know. Or just send a big "thanks" to mdemers@wakeaudubon.org. Or send her some fine chocolates to our PO box. Trust me, I'll see that she gets them!

continued inside ...



Wake Audubon
P.O. Box 12452
Raleigh, NC 27605

www.wakeaudubon.org

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Raleigh, NC
Permit No. 942

Wake Audubon Calendar

Join us for these fun and informative events.

Monthly Meetings

Wake Audubon members meet the second Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, 11 W. Jones St., Raleigh. Free parking is available on Jones St., one block past the museum. Directions are available on the museum's website at www.naturalsciences.org/visinfo/index.html. All meetings are free and open to the public.

Check www.wakeaudubon.org for schedule changes and other events.

Using Cool Bugs in our Streams to Determine Water Quality

Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 7:30 p.m.
It's good to have bugs in your water! Trish MacPherson of the NC Division of Water Quality's Biological Assessment Unit will explain how and why aquatic insects and other benthic macroinvertebrates are used to assess water quality.

Bobcats in Coastal NC

February 10, 7:30 p.m.
NCSU PhD student and research assistant Aimeé Rockhill will provide background information on bobcats and an overview of her research in Bull Neck Swamp, a 6,000-acre wetland that serves as home to at least eight of these elusive cats.

Research, Inventory, and Monitoring in North Carolina State Parks

March 10, 7:30 p.m.
More than just recreational facilities, North Carolina's state parks are natural resource reservoirs and rare

species refugia. Join State Parks Inventory Biologist Ed Corey for an overview of biological inventory, monitoring, and research efforts on our parklands.

Anderson Point Bird Walks January 10, 2009

Leader: Kari Wouk
Free and open to the public.
Binoculars will be provided as needed.
Contact Kari at kwouk@wakeaudubon.org or 919-395-5630.

February 14, 2009

Leader: Kari Wouk
Subject: Planning for Purple Martins and other Backyard Birds. Learn how to attract purple martins and other birds to your yard! Learn how to care for and maintain a colony of martins, a bluebird nest box, and other bird homes. You'll also learn what to look for in a house. Sponsored by Wake Audubon Society. Ages 6 yrs and up. 9 a.m. - noon. Contact Kari at kwouk@wakeaudubon.org or 919-395-5630.

Field Trips

Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Park, Scotland Neck, NC

Saturday, January 17
Leader: Becky Desjardins
Meet at the entrance at 10:45 a.m.

Sylvan Heights is a nifty 8-acre aviary featuring internationally rare and endangered ducks, geese, and swans. We will have a guided tour at 11 a.m. This is the best time of year to tour the aviary as all the birds are in their spiffy breeding plumage.

... continued from front page

Please take some time to look over the diverse programs on our calendar. Our programs are designed for all ages and levels of expertise. Please join us whenever you can. Sometimes we have last-minute changes, so check the website periodically. Details about trips are posted on the website, along with directions, as needed. Also, Megan is working on a calendar page on the website to allow you multiple views of event scheduling. One of the most useful for me during our test phase was seeing all scheduled events by month. I think you'll find this and other web items useful.

We will celebrate another "Bird of the Year" in 2009. Back, by popular demand, is the Purple Martin! You may recall we initiated this program with this species in 2007, but for various reasons we were unable to fully celebrate and develop the program. This idea was the brainchild of former WAS president and newsletter editor Chrissy Pearson. Chrissy will be stepping down from her editorial chores, and as one way to say, "THANK YOU, Chrissy!" for her tremendous work for WAS, we decided to bring back her original nominee and do it right this time. We have a variety of activities planned, including a weekend trip in July to the Mann's Harbor Bridge to view the roosting spectacle. We hope to schedule a boat ride for that event on Saturday evening, and as it is a joint trip with the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, we think it will fill up fast. So plan ahead.

New Wake Audubon member Sue Buechele will try to fill Chrissy's shoes on newsletter duties, for which the rest of us are most grateful! If you have comments or ideas, please contact her at: editor@wakeaudubon.org.

We also want to send a big "THANKS" to those of you who responded to our request for a special donation. Much of the money will be used to fund Audubon Adventure kits. We had an outstanding response in 2008 from Wake County schools to our offer to provide Audubon Adventure kits. The kits are designed to meet specific learning criteria required by the NC Board of Education, using some facet of the natural world to do so. The program's popularity caught us off-guard, but your support provided the final installment. Teachers are singing the program's praises, and you can come hear from some of them at our November monthly meeting.

The board will be working on several other fundraising events during the year. I've heard rumors of at least one rather entertaining idea, so stay tuned. We are planning an autumn sale of coffee, birdseed, and homemade feeders, just in time for the holidays. We hope to have details available in the April newsletter.

We will continue to participate in a number of festivals in the area. If you are interested in helping tend a shift at such an event, let Kari know. We hope to have many of you enjoying nature with us throughout 2009.

~ John Gerwin

please remember to thank our sponsor

GREAT OUTDOOR PROVISION Co. 		
Chapel Hill Eastgate	Outdoor Clothing & Equipage since 1972	Raleigh Cameron Village
Durham Northgate Mall	www.greatoutdoorprovision.com	N. Raleigh Falls Village

Searching the Internet or doing some online shopping? Try www.goodsearch.com and choose Wake Audubon as your charity. They'll give us a donation at no cost to you!

Calendar (continued)

Admission is \$7 for ages 13-61; anyone younger than 13 or older than 61 pays \$5. On the web at: www.shwpark.com/.

Space is limited on this field trip, so please RSVP! To RSVP, get directions, arrange carpools and other information please contact Becky at bdesjardins@wakeaudubon.org or 919-733-7450, ext. 710.

Optional field trip extension: Birding the Tar River Trail in Rocky Mount. Anyone interested can meet at 9 a.m. at Sunset Park in Rocky Mount and explore this 3-mile trail, then head for Sylvan Heights.

Woodcock Walk

Saturday, February 14

Leader: John Connors

A Valentine Treat! Come see the amazing courtship of the American Woodcock, which it performs in late winter at sunset and sunrise. This is

an evening walk, so bring a flashlight and meet at 5 p.m. Trip location will be decided once a pair of birds has been discovered. For trip details, contact John at john.connors@ncmail.net or 919-733-7450, ext. 602.

Bird Banding at Prairie Ridge Saturday, March 28

Leaders: John Gerwin and Becky Desjardins

Wake Audubon board members and ornithologists Becky Desjardins and John Gerwin will demonstrate the art and science of banding birds at Prairie Ridge Ecostation, located in Raleigh, off Reedy Creek Road. On the web at: www.naturalsciences.org/prairieridge/index.htm.

This event will be held jointly with the NC Museum of Natural Sciences. Space is limited! To sign up, contact Cathy Fergen at cathy.fergen@ncmail.net, or 919-733-7450, ext. 671.

Feathered Facts: Bird of the Year

Purple Martin (PUMA)

Martins are fine migrants and aerial feeders. Right now they are cruising the airways of much of South America, in lowlands east of the Andes and mostly north of the Tropic of Capricorn. There, they feast on a "bugflet" of flying insects over rainforests, clearings, and agricultural areas.

PUMAs begin to migrate north in January, arriving in the Gulf Coast region by mid-month. Early arriving males, called "scouts," are seen in NC by late February. Contrary to popular belief, scouts are not looking for new breeding sites. They are older birds, the first ones to arrive in or pass through an area on their way back to their previous year's nesting sites. They seldom switch to new housing. Younger sub-adults are the ones that colonize new sites. They often return later than full adults and in our area can colonize a new site as late as the end of May.

Native Americans hung up empty gourds for PUMAs before Europeans arrived in North America. East of the Rockies, PUMAs are totally dependent on human-supplied nest boxes. Out West they still nest the old-fashioned way, in woodpecker cavities.

For more information, visit: <http://www.purplemartin.org/>. To read more and hear a recording, visit: http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Purple_Martin_dtl.html and click the multimedia link to the right.

~John Gerwin

