

Birding Weekend in the North Carolina Mountains

Wear your hiking boots and bring your binoculars for a weekend of birding in the northern Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina with Wake Audubon Board member and Museum of Natural Sciences Curator of Birds John Gerwin. We will visit Moses Cone and Julian Price National Parks, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Snake and Rich Mountain area north of Boone, and other areas as time permits. For birders of all levels, brush up on your birding skills as we explore some beautiful mountain habitats.

- When:** Friday, May 19 (1 p.m.) to Sunday, May 21 (6 p.m.)
- Fee:** \$20 for Audubon members (\$30 for non-members)
Fee covers travel and instruction. Lodging information will be available at registration.
- Leaders:** John Gerwin, Museum ornithologist
Curtis Smalling, NC Audubon Society
- Where:** Meet at Museum of Natural Sciences, travel by Museum bus to field sites
- Minimum age:** 12 (minors must be accompanied by a registered adult)
- Activity Levels:** easy to moderate
- Register:** email john.gerwin@ncmail.net

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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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May 2006

Wingbeats

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First Count at Lumber River IBA Conducted by Canoe Yields 49 Species

Twenty-one birders from Wake Audubon, Audubon North Carolina, and Lumberton conducted a canoe trip/bird count of the Lumber River Important Bird Area (IBA) on Saturday, March 25.

Nine canoes and three kayaks put in at the US-74 bridge and took out nine-and-a-half miles downstream at the Lumber River State Park Headquarters at Princess Anne in Robeson County. This was the first organized effort by Wake Audubon to fulfill its stewardship responsibility for the Lumber River IBA—an agreement it recently made with Audubon North Carolina.

The lower Lumber River is a beautiful black-water stream that meanders through mostly swamp land marked by bald cypress, swamp black gum, red maple and several kinds of oak that make this stretch not only an IBA, but a North Carolina Natural Heritage Site as well. The entire 115 mile length of the river is included in the Lumber River State Park. The State Park Service currently holds title to a little over 8,000 acres along the banks of the river. The IBA, however, includes only the stretch we paddled plus a few more miles downstream.

We identified 49 species of birds and added eight species to the Natural Resource Inventory Database for Lumber

River State Park. The birds ranged in size from great blue herons to ruby crowned kinglets. A pair of red-shouldered hawks put on one of their patented raucous, aerial displays that thrilled those who witnessed it.

Based on a March 6 reconnaissance trip by Audubon North Carolina's Curtis Smalling and Wake Audubon's John Little, we expected to find a large number of red-headed woodpecker sightings, but were disappointed to identify only one. Smalling indicated that this area is likely a wintering ground for the species, which probably began their journey to their summer regions during the intervening three weeks.

During the lunch break along the bank, some members of the group found a carcass of a long nose gar — a menacing looking predatory fish native to the river. It, too, was added to the State Park Natural Resource Inventory. Curtis Smalling calculated the bird numbers on this trip.

Wake Audubon will sponsor future activities at the Lumber River IBA, so be on the lookout for more trips. They will include some activities that non-paddling members can participate in. For more information on North Carolina's IBAs, visit www.ncaudubon.org.

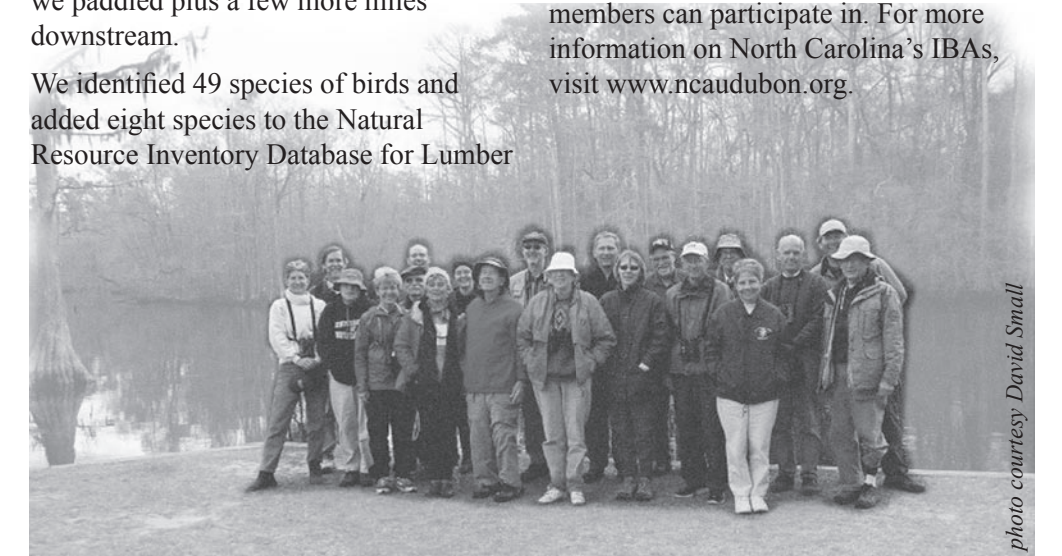



photo courtesy David Small

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Inside:

Sign up to help count birds during our Spring Migration Bird Count — learn more on page 2.

Wake Audubon Calendar

Join us for these fun and informative upcoming events.

Monthly Meeting — May 9

Picnic at Anderson Point — Join us at our adopted park, Anderson Point, for a potluck picnic and bird walk to see how spring has arrived at this beautiful park. Bring a dish to share and your binoculars, and enjoy food, fellowship and a little birding on the side!

Please note the change in meeting time for the picnic — 6:30 p.m.!

You can reach Anderson Point by driving 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.

Birding on the Buckeye Saturday, May 13, 8:30 a.m.

Join us for a morning walk along the Buckeye Trail. Meet at the parking area of the Buckeye Trail on Crabtree Blvd. between Raleigh Blvd. and Capital Blvd. Contact Bob Winstead for more information at birderbob1@aol.com or 845-5006.

Field Trip: Spring Bird Count

Saturday, May 13 The spring North America Migration Count is set up very much like the Christmas Bird Count, attempting to survey the same sites in southern Wake County using the same count leaders. Birdwatchers of any skill level are welcome, and this is an excellent opportunity for beginners to experience birds in their full spring regalia and song. This count includes all of Wake County, so we also send some folks to seek out special sites for nesting Bald Eagles, Cliff Swallows and even the Raleigh landfill for gulls. It's a great way to enjoy the outdoors with birds and birding friends. To participate please contact John Connors either by phone (733-7450 x 602) or by e-mail at john.connors@ncmail.net by May 11.

Bonus Field Trip: Birding in the North Carolina Mountains Weekend, May 20-21

Join John Gerwin for some special birding in the mountains. See the box on the back page for more details.

Feathered Facts

Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) — *This migratory "nightjar" returns to our area at this time, from its non-breeding quarters in South America. Not actually a hawk, these birds do look and fly like falcons, and "hawk" insects on the wing. Listen for the loud "peeent" call, similar to the Woodcock, in early evening and morning hours. Traditionally a ground-nester, especially in sandy pinewoods, the species has adapted to an urban lifestyle, where many nest on rooftops that still have a gravel lining. Unfortunately, new construction does not use gravel, and studies have shown that this species will only use rooftops with gravel. Listen for the "booming" sound of the male, as he performs a steep dive as a courtship and territorial display. At the bottom of the dive, he flexes his wings downward, and the "boom" results from the way air flows over the wingtips.*

~John Gerwin

President's Message

Popping the Cork on a Bottle of Wine

Do you ever think about birds when you open a bottle of wine?

Unless there is a bird on the label, I typically don't. But the other evening I peeled the foil from a nice chardonnay and was disappointed to find a plastic cork. This isn't the first time I've drilled into the weird, spongy stopper in a bottle of vino, but every time I am greeted with plastic instead of cork I feel cheated. After all, to me part of the pleasure of drinking a nice glass of wine is the experience: the unique texture of the cork, the *whop!* of it slipping from the bottle, the color filling the glass and the snap of the liquid as it touches your tongue. Even if the rest is the same, a plastic "cork" somehow cheapens it all.

But what does this have to do with birds? As I turned that plastic stopper out of the chardonnay, I remembered reading something about the importance of cork forests to diverse animal species. So I did some research.

In yet another example of how the seemingly smallest things we do can affect creatures half a world away, the decline of natural cork in the wine industry is being looked upon with concern. Cork, which is farmed by stripping the outer bark from cork oak trees, hails primarily from Spain and Portugal. The bark stripping does not harm the trees, and requires no logging. Diverse habitats thrive in and around cork forests, not to mention the lifestyles

of many Spanish and Portuguese farmers who depend on the industry. According to the UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, falling demand for cork stoppers could so reduce the value of these forests that their future could be jeopardized. The Society goes on to say that the destruction of the cork oak forests "would be comparable to turning Yellowstone National Park into a wheatfield. Species such as the Spanish imperial eagle and the Iberian lynx would probably go extinct."

What can you do? If you are a wine drinker, buy wines with natural cork stoppers when you can tell the difference. If you purchase a bottle with a plastic stopper, complain to the store where you bought it and to the vineyard or winery itself. Contact information is often on the label or on a winery's Web site.

But let's take this one step further: again, who would have connected wine corks with the wellbeing of the Spanish Imperial Eagle? What other seemingly mundane items have a potentially large impact on species we wish to protect? And how many of these species aren't across the Atlantic in Spain, but right here in Wake County?

These are questions we should all be asking ourselves about the daily choices we make. We just may be surprised at the answers.

Cheers!

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News of Interest

Conservation Award Goes to WA's Lena Gallitano — Longtime member and former Wake Audubon president Lena Gallitano was awarded the 2005 Governor's Conservation Award for Wildlife Volunteer of the Year during a ceremony in March. She won for her strong leadership as volunteer coordinator during the start-up period of the N.C. Birding Trail, and for her commitment to defending Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge from the Navy's establishment of an outlying landing field (OLF) nearby.

The Governor's Conservation Awards are conferred jointly by the N.C. Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Federation under a long-standing agreement with the Governor's office. Awards are given in 18 categories. The category of Wildlife Volunteer of the Year is new this year, established specifically to honor Lena, says Chris Canfield of Audubon NC.

Lena's work opposing the OLF led her to the N.C. Birding Trail. Not satisfied with simply urging local citizens to write post cards in opposition to the OLF, she asked Canfield about creating a birding trail to provide additional incentive for protecting that area. Learning one was already in the planning stages, she volunteered as part-time interim coordinator.

Today, sites in the coastal section of the Trail have been selected and development is beginning. Though the Navy continues to say the proposed OLF site is their preferred location, opposition remains strong. And while environmental studies are underway and a final decision by the Navy is expected early next year, Lena's schedule remains busy. There is always more work to be done.

Act Locally

Save the Earthworms and Avoid Chemical Use in your Yard

Is your yard perfect and green or a little wild looking? In my neighborhood, many "perfect" yards sport signs warning passers-by about toxic chemicals recently applied. In my wild yard, there are no such signs, but instead there are violets and moss, a variety of grasses and the occasional dandelions growing together.

I pride my yard in its natural resiliency, its diversity, and the birds and butterflies that come to visit my chemical-free urban haven. I don't worry about my child walking barefoot in the grass or having a picnic in my garden, and by not using any fertilizers I don't contribute to chemical runoff.

I can tell which neighbors use chemicals on their lawns by the plethora of dead earthworms on their sidewalks right after a chemical application.

Earthworms are a vital part of a healthy underground ecosystem, yet it is estimated that where pesticides are used, 60 to 90 percent of earthworms are killed! To maintain a nice yard while still avoiding chemical use, follow these tips from eartheasy.com:

- Improve the soil quality.
- Choose a grass adapted to your local conditions.
- Don't mow too low.
- Water deeply, but not too often.
- Control thatch buildup.

Find more information about being considerate to the Earth by visiting your local library for books on organic gardening and lawn care (try Rodale's Chemical-Free Yard and Garden) or read Audubon at Home at www.audubon.org. ~Liessa Bowen