

Challenge Grant to Benefit NC Birding Trail's Next Printed Guide

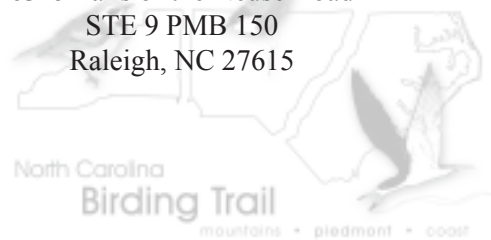
Wake Audubon members have an opportunity to help the NC Birding Trail (NCBT) through a Carolina Bird Club (CBC) challenge grant of up to \$5,000. Funds raised through this challenge by Dec. 31 will help fund publication of the Piedmont Trail Guide, currently in the development stage and due for release in Spring 2008.

Golden LEAF has awarded the NCBT a one-to-one matching grant for development and printing of the next Guide, but the NCBT must raise additional funds to meet the match. CBC has generously agreed to assist the NCBT by offering this challenge grant — we hope Wake Audubon members will also support this project with a donation.

The CBC matching grant offers donors a rare opportunity to turn \$1 into \$4 of cash for the NCBT. For each dollar donated, CBC will match it dollar for dollar up to \$5,000. This potentially will result in \$10,000 that will be matched with another \$10,000 from Golden LEAF for a total of \$20,000 for the NCBT — a great start on the design and publication of the Piedmont Trail Guide.

We hope CBC can count on Wake Audubon members for a donation! Mail your donation to the address below and note "NCBT Challenge Grant" on your check:

Carolina Bird Club
6325 Falls of the Neuse Road
STE 9 PMB 150
Raleigh, NC 27615



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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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September 2007

Wingbeats

Inside:

Find out how you can turn a \$1 donation to the N.C. Birding Trail into \$4! See the back page for a giving opportunity.

Manteo Martin Field Trip Proves Marvelous Indeed

The Museum of Natural Sciences and Wake Audubon combined forces once again for a trip to see the marvelous Purple Martins at Manns Harbor Bridge. An enthusiastic group of 21 departed Raleigh at 1 p.m., bound for Manteo. After an early dinner, we went straight to the Manns Harbor Bridge.

By 7:30 p.m. or so, some martins were beginning to show up. The skies were overcast, and at first birds drifted in from the west. The "drift" became a stream after 15 to 20 minutes, with pulses of large groups of birds. One could look to the west/southwest with binoculars and see large kettles of martins, moving our way. Many of the birds stayed high as they flew over us at the west end, before dropping to swarm just over the water. As the sun set, colors washed over the western skies, and martins were going to roost under and along the outer I-beams of the bridge. It was amazing to watch the masses building up on both sides, and it was impossible to count, but I'm betting a month's pay we had over 75,000 birds, if not more (the Web site for this roost reports the flock gets to 100,000).

On Saturday morning, a die-hard group went back at 5 a.m. to witness the exodus. As first light hit the skies by 5:30, we stood, not hearing much, and wondering. It was still pretty dark. I took a look with my binos and saw that thousands of birds were streaming out from under and on the bridge! They were staying low to the water and flying in such a way, quietly, that it was too dark to



Purple Martins at Manns Harbor Bridge can number in the tens of thousands. Photo by Jerry Reynolds.

notice with the naked eye. We had to use our binoculars and scopes for the next 15 or so minutes to see the exodus, and then — click — it became light enough for us to see with our eyes only. By 6:15 we returned to the hotel for the sleepyheads in our group, and breakfast, after which we headed to Bodie Island.

Not much but mosquitoes greeted us on the boardwalk, so we headed down to Oregon Inlet, where we enjoyed great looks at Least, Common, Sandwich, Royal, and Gull-billed Terns, Black Skimmers, American Oystercatchers, and a fairly cooperative Semipalmated Sandpiper. Forester's Terns were a bit more distant, but visible.

We next went to the Pea Island Visitor Center. Along the way, a number of us spotted one of the few Black-necked Stilts that breed on the island. After lunch we walked the boardwalk and out at the observation deck got good looks at a Tricolored Heron and another Gull-billed Tern. Less cooperative were far

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Wake Audubon Calendar

Join us for these fun and informative upcoming events.

Monthly Meeting

Adapt to Change or Else: Saga of the Swift

Sept. 11 at 7:30 p.m.

Chimney swifts appear dependent on humans for their homes. What did they do before chimneys? Join Wake Audubon board member John Connors for insight into their curious natural history and how they have adapted to life in a changing world.

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.

Anderson Point Bird Walk Purple Martins and Migration

Sept. 15, 9 a.m. to noon

Learn about migration patterns of purple martins, and how to clean and

prepare their houses for the winter. Participants will also learn how to be a purple martin landlord and how to attract martins next spring. In a walk around the park, we will look for migrating birds and discuss migration patterns.

Special Event & Volunteer Opp.

Bugfest

Saturday, Sept. 15, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Visit the Wake Audubon exhibit at Bugfest, held at the Museum of Natural Sciences. Or, better yet, join us as a volunteer! You will get a free lunch, great parking, and a very cool T-shirt. As always, we will have our very popular Mealworm Petting Zoo. The 11th annual version of the world's biggest and most popular "buggy" event will offer outstanding displays, activities and compound-eye-popping shows.

Act Locally

How to Dispose of Hazardous Wastes

Many households have and use hazardous materials such as cleaners, solvents, and batteries, just to name a few. These items can be troublesome and even dangerous to dispose of when the time comes. What do you do when you need to dispose of hazardous materials?

To reduce waste overall, try to buy only the things you need, and choose environmentally friendly products. When containers, fluids, and products must be discarded, please use precautions and proper disposal methods and locations. If items are still usable, you may be able to find someone else who can use them. Otherwise, each municipality has its own rules

about hazardous waste collection, so before you toss hazardous waste, be sure to check out how and where you can safely dispose of it.

Wake County currently accepts, among other things, batteries, cooking oil, drain openers, fire extinguishers (dry chemical only), florescent light bulbs, household cleaners and polishes, furniture strippers, lighter fluid, fuel oil, kerosene, used motor oil, antifreeze, paints, pesticides, poisons, solvents, thinners, wood preservatives, mercury thermometers, and propane tanks.

See more about Triangle area hazardous waste disposal at www.trianglehgw.org/enghome.htm.

President's Message

Reduce Unnatural Pressures on Yard Birds

We have a lily pond just off our deck, and we enjoy going out there after work and "frog spotting." We love to watch them and we especially like listening to them. The pond, which is rimmed with stacked stone, provides a great place for skinks and other critters. We've counted as many as 10 frogs there at one time.

About three weeks ago Jim spotted a large, beautiful black snake in the rocks that encircle the pond. Oh no! Our poor frogs were in danger of becoming somebody's dinner. We didn't actually see it happen, but the most frogs we have counted in the last two weeks is five. We are assuming that the snake had a good dinner, and maybe also discouraged a few frogs from hanging around the neighborhood. Stories similar to ours are common in neighborhoods around the Triangle. Many folks report being visited by Great Blue Herons, birds that are very good at catching pond fish. We still have all our goldfish, but we have seen Great Blues flying over; one of them may drop by sometime and grab some dinner.

We can't protect wildlife from natural predators — everyone has to eat. A beautiful Cooper's Hawk flew through a few weeks ago and scattered all of the birds. It got a towhee, which it took up to its perch and proceeded to devour. It was sad, but it is the natural order of things.

Birds and other wildlife face plenty of dangers as they forage for food, raise

their young, and migrate. Natural pressures are high enough, but our wild friends shouldn't have to face dangers inadvertently caused by our human actions. To help us learn how to reduce these needless dangers, National Audubon's Web site provides information on keeping wildlife safe. What are their suggestions for things we can do?

First: minimize window collisions. Such collisions are estimated to kill over a million birds each year in the United States alone. Practical steps we can take around our homes to reduce collisions are to place feeders either within three feet of windows or more than 30 feet away. National Audubon also recommends reducing window glare that confuses birds by drawing window shades and/or drapes over windows when leaving for work or vacation.

Second: cats. At our house, our cat stays inside, with a windowsill view of all of the bird action. This is the only way to be a responsible cat owner and remain bird friendly. To protect your yard birds from other cats, provide cover such as vegetation or a brush pile 10 to 12 feet from feeders so that birds will have a place to hide.

National Audubon also has recommendations for safe bird feeding, decreasing light impacts, and a score of other ideas. Visit their Web site to learn more.

Happy birding,



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away views of Gadwalls, a Little Blue Heron and a Caspian Tern.

We continued south, with cloudy skies, to Cape Hatteras. We made a stop at the large freshwater pond along the entrance road just off the highway. This turned

scopes switched to that, where one could easily see four moons around it.

Sunday was another full day with stops at Run Hill, a State Natural Area sand dune near Jockey's Ridge, and the Pocosin Lakes NWR Visitor Center.



This Prothonotary Warbler was one of several land birds the group spotted on the way back to Raleigh. Photo by Doug Pratt.

out to be a real treat. A Green Heron was foraging just below us and numerous Gadwall and Wood Ducks were out, along with several each Killdeer, Pectoral and Spotted Sandpipers.

Under clearing skies, we headed back to Manteo for another early dinner, and then most of us went back to the west side for the rest of the martin story. Perhaps it was the clear skies, but this time many more birds flew by just over bus top level. Also, the event seemed a bit more protracted, as martins streamed in more leisurely. With brighter light, the different plumages were more visible.

Again, it was a real spectacle watching what seemed like an endless parade of birds arrive and "stage" just off the bridge, before going to roost. As the skies darkened, stars and planets began to appear, and Doug Pratt pointed out that Venus was in its crescent phase. Two scopes were soon pointed at Venus and we enjoyed seeing this phenomenon. Jerry Reynolds, our driver and trip coordinator, found Jupiter, and the

Here our planned 30 minute walk after lunch turned into about 90 minutes, with some land birds finally, including families of Prothonotary Warblers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

This brought us to the end of our marvelous trip, and it was time to head home. We returned to Raleigh by 5:30 p.m., a bit tired but full of great memories of plants, animals, habitats and even celestial bodies seen — and who could forget those highly amusing puns provided by your witty leaders?

~John Gerwin

Did You Know?

According to the Coastal Carolina Purple Martin Society, the morning exodus of birds from the Manns Harbor Bridge can be seen on Doppler radar!