

## Pink Flamingos: Wildlife Wonder or Neighborhood Nuisance?

Bird lovers rejoice at the chance to add these pink-feathered specimens to their life lists. Befuddled neighbors wonder what exactly attracted such an ornithological anomaly. Now, for a donation of only \$20 to Wake Audubon, you can share this wonder with your friends and their neighbors.

Pink flamingos travel in flocks of more than 40. They arrive mysteriously in the front yards of bird watchers, nature enthusiasts, and people who just have it coming to them. An information pamphlet about the flamingos accompanies their arrival and lets the infested party know who is responsible.



Flamingos may remain to feed in the same yard for up to three days. If approached, they defend their turf with nasal honking or even growling. Luckily, a Wake Audubon flamingo relocation team was recently trained to peacefully encourage the plastic flock to disperse.

If your yard becomes infested this spring, Wake Audubon volunteers will arrive to remove the vagrant flamingos for a suggested donation of \$10. Flamingo Insurance is available for \$5 per season. We highly recommend this protection, as flamingos are currently the top wildlife hazard in Wake County.

Flamingos will be flocking to yards all over Wake County this spring. Order an infestation for your neighbor, sister-in-law, or coworker. Each infestation supports the conservation and education efforts of Wake Audubon. Pick up an order form at our next monthly meeting, or download one at [www.wakeaudubon.org](http://www.wakeaudubon.org) or by e-mail at [flamingos@wakeaudubon.org](mailto:flamingos@wakeaudubon.org).

Don't wait! Flamingos thrive in our area only from April 15 to May 30 and September through October.

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### Wake Audubon Officers 2009

President: Becky Desjardins

Vice President: Jeff Beane

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**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.*

### President's Message

On behalf of the board of directors, I sincerely thank everyone who responded to our call for a special year-end donation. In these difficult economic times, your generosity is all the more appreciated.

Special donations were made in memory of:

Marion Cusick      Annette Malcom Rathbun

Bob Hader      Edward J. Salmeri

We also received donations in honor of:

John Little      A.C. Snow

Tom Quay      Dorothy Stone

Melody Scott

Again, thank you for your generosity.

*Becky*

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April 2009

Wingbeats

### Inside:

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## The Wildest Day

Sometime between mid-April and mid-May each year, Wake Audubon members go wild. I speak of the Wildathon—our version of National Audubon's Birdathon. It's what you'd expect from an "-athon": an endurance exercise. Its purposes: to identify as many species as possible in a given time period, to raise money for wildlife conservation and Wake Audubon, and to have fun. Individuals or teams seek sponsors who pledge either a per-species amount or a flat donation. Ever a trend-setter, Wake Audubon doesn't limit our efforts to birds—teams may count any species they choose. Hence the name Wildathon. Each team can make its own rules, as long as they're clear to the sponsors.

Wake Audubon began participating in this event in 2000. Every year since then, I've looked forward to this very special day. My team—including Bob Davis, John Finnegan, Stephanie Horton, and Todd Pusser—counts vertebrates (fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals), primarily because we can reasonably identify most species in that group. We count every live or dead species that we can identify by sight or sound in 24 hours, anywhere in North Carolina. Only wild, free-ranging native species or well-established exotics, such as house sparrows, are counted. Identifications must be accepted by the entire team. Our first year's effort lasted 18 hours, but each year since we've gone a full 24, which isn't as easy it sounds. It's hard enough to stay awake for 24 hours, but to stay intensely active both mentally and physically, doing everything within reason to turn up just one more species before time runs out, is a challenge—one we embrace. During the last few hours, sleep deprivation may induce a surreal, dreamlike state. So we call ourselves the "24-Hour Dream Team." Two years ago, Ed Corey formed a team that also follows our rules of counting all vertebrates and participating for 24 hours. They've been strong competitors, closely approaching our species totals. Will this be the year Corey's courageous crusaders beat the 24-Hour Dream Team?

Participating again this year will be Becky Desjardins and her flock of junior naturalists, doing a long day, but probably not 24 hours. They'll count birds only, in keeping with their ornithological lifestyles. Will any other teams take the Wildathon challenge? Will "Two Chicks and a Cluck" ever resurface?

Wildathon proceeds support NC Audubon's Coastal Island Sanctuaries, local chapter projects, and two conservation and research initiatives of the NC Herpetological Society: Project Bog Turtle and Project Simus, aimed at the BogTurtle and Southern Hognose Snake, respectively, and their habitats. This year we must work harder than ever to raise funds for these worthy causes.

If you can't participate by being on a team and finding sponsors, please consider sponsoring one of our established teams who go wild for Wake Audubon in support of the wild creatures and places we love.

To donate, form your own team, or receive more information, contact Becky Desjardins ([becky.desjardins@ncmail.net](mailto:becky.desjardins@ncmail.net)), Jeff Beane ([jeff.beane@ncmail.net](mailto:jeff.beane@ncmail.net)), or Ed Corey ([ed.corey@ncmail.net](mailto:ed.corey@ncmail.net)).

~ Jeff Beane

Wingbeats will be published **only** electronically beginning in January 2010. The newsletter will be posted on our website, [www.wakeaudubon.org](http://www.wakeaudubon.org). If you want to receive an e-mail when the newsletter is posted, send an e-mail to Kari Wouk: [kwouk@wakeaudubon.org](mailto:kwouk@wakeaudubon.org).

# Wake Audubon Calendar

Join us for these fun and informative events.

## Monthly Meetings

WA meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, 11 W. Jones St., Raleigh. All meetings are free and open to the public. Free parking is available on Jones St., one block past the museum. Check [www.naturalsciences.org/visinfo/index.html](http://www.naturalsciences.org/visinfo/index.html) for directions. Check [www.wakeaudubon.org](http://www.wakeaudubon.org) for schedule changes and other events.

## Bird Vocalizations

April 14, 7:30 p.m.

Birds have the greatest sound-producing capabilities of all vertebrates, with vocal repertoires among the richest and most varied in the animal kingdom. Dr. Ted Simons, professor of zoology and forestry at NCSU, will talk about how and why birds call and sing.

## Birding Unbirded Alaska—Chevak to ANWR

May 12, 7:30 p.m.

Join former Wake Audubon president Lena Gallitano for a travelogue of birds and other images from her June 2008 trip to Chevak (a village in Alaska's Yukon Delta) and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

## The Challenge of Conserving New Zealand's Native Wildlife

June 9, 7:30 p.m.

New Zealand's unique animal assemblage has suffered dramatic

changes since the arrival of people. Museum educator and Wake Audubon board member John Connors will talk about efforts to conserve New Zealand's birds and other wildlife.

## Anderson Point Bird Walks

Bird walks at Anderson Point are free and open to the public. Binoculars will be provided as needed.

April 18, 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Sean Higgins, [Sean.Higgins@ncmail.net](mailto:Sean.Higgins@ncmail.net)

May 16, 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Kari Wouk, (919) 395-5630, [krwouk@yahoo.com](mailto:krwouk@yahoo.com)

June 27, 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Kari Wouk

## Field Trips

### Wildflower Walk at Picture Creek (near Butner)

Sunday, April 26

Leader: Dr. Jon Stucky, Professor of Plant Biology, NCSU

The soil at Picture Creek is more like Midwestern prairie soil than typical NC soil. We'll walk about a half-mile to a mowed utility right-of-way that supports several rare species, including the federally listed Smooth Coneflower and Prairie Dock. We may see some of the earliest-blooming species in this community, including Hoary Puccoon, a bright yellow delight. Contact [jstucky@nc.rr.com](mailto:jstucky@nc.rr.com) for more information or to sign up.

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# Meet You Online

We've formed a new online group called, "Wake Audubon Birdwatching and Environmental Meetup."

Meetup.com is an online social networking site that facilitates offline group meetings. Meetup allows people to find and join groups unified by a common interest, such as politics, books, hobbies, or in our case, nature and birding. Users enter their city or ZIP Code and their topic of interest, and the website helps them locate a group. Anyone who goes to [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) and types "birdwatching" or "environmental" as their topic of interest will find our group. The group arranges its own meeting times and venues. There are more than 700 Meetup groups in the Triangle area alone, and thousands of groups worldwide!

A number of new members already have found Wake Audubon via Meetup. Many of them are new to the area and were happy to find us.

We encourage all WA members to join our Meetup group, too, for several reasons:

- You can see daily updates regarding field trips, meetings, and other events.
- If you RSVP for a field trip, you can get reminders about the trip AND you will be notified if there is a change in the plans.
- You can send messages to other members of the group.
- You can get the word out to your friends about Audubon and our important mission; just ask them to look for us on Meetup.com.
- The more members in the group, the more people tend to join ... sort of like driving past a busy restaurant and saying, "Hey, let's try that place, the food must be good!"

Meetup is free to join and requires just a few minutes to register, using an e-mail address, user name, and a password. You do not have to reveal any personal information.

We hope existing Wake Audubon members will join our online group, and we encourage those who find us via Meetup.com to join Wake Audubon and the National Audubon Society.

Visit the Wake Audubon Birdwatching and Environmental Meetup today. I'll meet you online!

~ Lynn Erla Beagle

## Not a member yet? What are you waiting for?

We need you to help us maintain our organization's integrity, diversity, and success. Go to <http://www.wakeaudubon.org/join.htm>, print the membership form, and mail it in today!

*please remember to thank our sponsor*

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Calendar (continued)

## Spring Bird Count

Saturday, May 9

Leader: John Connors, [john.connors@ncmail.net](mailto:john.connors@ncmail.net), (919) 733-7450, ext. 602.

## Birding in the NC Mountains

Friday-Sunday, May 15-17

Leaders: Doug Pratt, Becky Desjardins

A few seats on the bus remain open for a weekend of birding in NC's northern Appalachian Mountains. We'll visit Moses Cone Estate, Blue Ridge Parkway, the Snake and Rich Mountain area of Boone, and other areas as time permits. Birders of all ages and levels

are welcome!. Expect to see Bobolinks, Least Flycatchers, Baltimore Orioles, Cerulean Warblers, and more! Cost: \$30 for Friends of the NC Museum of Natural Sciences and Wake Audubon Society members, plus meals and lodging. Contact Debbie Houston at (919) 733-7450 x555 for more details and to register.

## Bird Monitoring on the Lumber River

Saturday-Sunday, June 6-7

Leader: Richard Brown, [birderbrown@gmail.com](mailto:birderbrown@gmail.com), (919) 215-1148.

## Wake Audubon Announces Junior Naturalist Club

On March 1, Wake Audubon's new Junior Naturalist Club met for the first time. The JNC is specifically for aspiring naturalists from 12 to 18 years old. We met at Prairie Ridge Ecostation, where, despite the inclement weather, we spotted a charming White-Crowned Sparrow.

We put together a calendar of events for the rest of the year, and we have a ton of fun events planned—everything from a pizza dinner to a trip to the Sandhills! Our next event is a trip on April 19 to the Triangle Land Conservancy's Middle Creek Bottomlands site in Johnston County.

To join the club, just contact Becky Holmes at [Becky.Holmes@ncmail.net](mailto:Becky.Holmes@ncmail.net). For more information on trips and other Junior Naturalist events, check out the calendar on the Wake Audubon website at [www.wakeaudubon.org/calendar](http://www.wakeaudubon.org/calendar).

## Feathered Facts: Bird of the Year

### Purple Martin, *Progne subis* (PUMA)

Martins begin to reappear in NC by mid-February, but most sightings occur in early March. Males generally arrive first, and females are not far behind. You can track their progress at: <http://purplemartin.org/scoutreport/>.

Upon arrival, they quickly form pair-bonds and begin the nesting process anew. Both adults assist with nest-building. Females lay a clutch of 2-7 eggs, which requires 15 days of incubation. The nestlings are tended to in the nest for up to 30 days, after which they are ready to strike out on their own as fledglings. Adults will continue to care for the young for 2-3 more weeks. At the now-defunct Hardee's colony site off Buck Jones Rd., we were banding some 15-day-old nestlings on April 16, 2004.

The birds at Prairie Ridge typically have their young in June, indicating that this site was founded by younger birds, which typically arrive later in spring. Adults weigh about 55 g or 2 oz. To see an animation of the development of a young martin, visit: <http://www.purplemartin.org/main/nestgrowmain.html>.

~John Gerwin

