



The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – April 2013

Cashiers – Franklin – Highlands – Scaly Mountain

www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org

The mission of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society is to provide opportunities to enjoy and learn about birds and other wildlife and to promote conservation and restoration of the habitats that support them.

Thoughts from the President

I know many of us have frequently thought about what are realistic, meaningful goals for our HPAS chapter. Education and partnering with local schools is one. Initiating and promoting programs that lead to enhanced, safe habitat for native birds is another. Being a local advocate for conservation within our community is a third.

But by far our chapter's largest expenditure of personal energies is involved with our ambitious weekly bird field trips and evening programs, which the community is encouraged to attend, regardless of birding experience level. So, as we near a new season of weekly field trips and evening programs, perhaps it is worth reflecting on what these activities can mean within a greater conservation context.

Birding is one pathway, accessible to anyone in the community, to experience an enhanced interaction with, and appreciation for, our natural world. And the value of such personal experience appears to be crucial to the future of that world. Sixty-five years ago Aldo Leopold wrote, "It's inconceivable to me that an ethical relationship to the land can exist without love, respect and admiration, and a high regard for its value." Jane Goodall is quoted as saying, "Only if we understand can we care. Only if we care will we help. Only if we help shall they be saved."

Our bird outings and programs may appear to be enjoyable adventures, and they are. However, greater, if subliminal, HPAS goals include cultivating those feelings of wonder, understanding, respect, caring, and value for the environment, along with personal commitments to conservation, to which Leopold and Goodall have famously referred.

Russ Regnery

Annual Membership Meeting and Program, Monday, June 10

The Annual Membership Meeting will take place on Monday, June 10, at the Highlands Civic Center. The meeting will be preceded by a potluck supper beginning at 6:00 pm. A brief business meeting at 7:15 pm will be followed by the program at 7:30 pm.

Russ Regnery, HPAS President, will present "Game-Changing Methods That Will Help Lead to Better Bird Conservation." Russ will discuss and show examples of some of the fascinating new methods that are being utilized for better understanding bird migration and behavior. The application of these techniques is helping to shape our understanding of what is required for successful bird conservation now and into the future. Russ said, "Some of these processes require input from 'citizen scientists'. And some of the same tools will hopefully be more readily available in the near future for enhancing our own personal birding experiences."

The primary business of the Annual Meeting is the election of Directors for HPAS. The nominating committee has presented the following slate, approved by the Board of Directors: Dee Andrey (Highlands), Romney Bathurst (Highlands), Avary Doubleday (Highlands), Mike Kaiser (Highlands), and Mary Lou Waas (Cashiers).

Doubleday will be elected for a two-year term and each of the others for a term of three years. There may be other nominations, so please watch the web site for the latest information on this and other business www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org. Nominations will be accepted from the floor; the nominator must have determined that the nominee is willing to serve and meets the requirements for election.

Please bring a dish to share at the potluck dinner – and an implement to serve it! This is always a fun time to catch up with those of our members who are returning from their Southern migration. You'll meet some new friends as well.

Education Programs

We are gearing up for another great season of educational opportunities for adults and children! Romney Bathurst will be presenting a CLE class on July 25 from 2:00 - 4:00pm entitled "Birding Beyond Borders". She is well qualified since she has made birding trips to over 40 countries in the past several years. We are also planning some professional development opportunities for teachers.

A new endeavor this year will be assisting Blue Ridge School in Cashiers with a nature-themed week of activities and a speaker during their summer reading enrichment program June 17-20. One of the most rewarding aspects of working with Audubon's education committee is the collaborative efforts with other organizations for the common good of environmental education.

Our education committee members all have full time jobs so we have many ways for volunteers to help with events and activities. If you love children and nature and would be willing to help out occasionally please contact me and we can find an appropriate volunteer opportunity!

Ann Campbell, anncampbell48@hotmail.com

Field Trips

Once again this year, beginning in May, the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society will offer regular Saturday field trips to the Highlands-Cashiers-Franklin-Sapphire Communities throughout the summer season.

This year's schedule includes several new, exciting venues as well as repeat visits to favorite birding spots in our area. This year the group will also coordinate some trips with the Franklin Bird Club, as well as enjoying the excitement of bird banding and up-close, in hand interactions with some of our special migrants. In addition, guest leaders will share their unique knowledge, and special Beginners sessions will be offered once per month. Those sessions are aimed at assisting feeder watchers, new and would-be birders with binoculars and field guides. Birders of all levels are welcome and encouraged to participate in all field trips.

As of now, the first two months are set and those wishing to join these free walks should consult both the HPAS website, www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org and the local papers in Cashiers and Highlands for meeting times and details. Most field trips will meet at 7:30 either in the Highlands Town Hall Parking lot and/or in Cashiers at the new Cashiers Community Center parking lot. Car-pooling is encouraged and usually essential due to limited parking at birding destinations. Participants should bring binoculars if they have them, water and stout walking shoes, cameras and sunscreen. Visored hats are often useful. HPAS has a supply of binoculars which we are happy to lend to those without, and trips will be led by birders experienced with our local birds and habitats, assisted by club members who will help with field guide identifications and binocular use.

Come join us for a Saturday morning exploring the out-of-doors in our beautiful mountains and the birds that inhabit them. Emily Dickenson said, "Hope is the thing with Feathers" and we hope that you will join us!

MAY

May 4th: Beginners' Walk with guest leader Jack Johnston, to Gibson Bottoms in Franklin. In order to take advantage of the best time of day, this trip will meet at Highlands Town Hall at 7:00 AM to carpool down the hill. Chapter President Russ Regnery, George Kaye and Mary Lou Waas will assist. Gibson Bottoms is a 65 acre conservation easement just north of Franklin. It includes a half-mile of riverfront on the Little Tennessee River, with several nest-boxes along the river. In addition to the bottomland, which was formerly farmed, it has upland, hilly habitat. When walking off the dirt roads, the grasses can be high, so closed toed shoes and long pants are recommended.

May 11th: A special joint walk with the Franklin Bird Club, led by Jim & Ellen Shelton, for the first time will visit the area near their home at Walnut Gap. Michelle Styring will assist. Highlands participants should carpool from the Highlands Town Hall Parking lot, meeting at 7:30, while Cashiers residents will meet at the Community Ctr. parking lot, at 7:45. We will be looking especially for Golden-winged Warblers as well as other wood-warbler species. Please contact Michelle at 828-743-9670 if you plan to join the walk.

May 18th: Lonesome Valley will once again welcome birders to their beautiful 800 acre canyon in Sapphire. Romney Bathurst will lead, assisted by Avary Doubleday, HPAS Vice President, and Kyle Pursel, HPAS Board Member and Stewardship Coordinator of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust. Please carpool as on 11 May, since parking is limited. Breeding migrants, such as Hooded and Blackburnian Warblers as well as many others will be featured. The walk will begin at 8 AM at Lonesome Valley.

May 21st: A special Tuesday outing to the beautiful Southern Highlands Reserve atop Mt. Toxaway. The flame azaleas and other native flora which the reserve helps protect and propagate should be in bloom and will assure a beautiful as well as bird-filled morning. This outing is limited to 20, so reservations are a must: Call Romney Bathurst, 526-1939, to sign up. The Reserve requests a \$20 donation from each participant. Bring a bag lunch to enjoy in the gardens, and don't forget cameras – the views are lovely!

May 25th: This week's walk in Highlands will visit one or more of the best birding sites in Highlands, and will be led by Brock Hutchins, Past President and Outings Committee Chairman, assisted by Michelle Styring and Pat Strickland. All participants should meet at 7:30 in the parking lot behind Highlands Town Hall.

JUNE

June 1st: This month's Beginners Walk will work on feeder species as the home of Edwin and Kay Poole in Highlands. Last year's group loved the action at multiple feeders and the help of HPAS leaders Brock Hutchins and Edwin Poole, who will be assisted by Mary Lou Waas. If you don't have your own binoculars, HPAS will loan you a pair for the morning and help you learn how to use them, too. Meet at Highlands Town Hall Parking lot at 7:30 for a fun morning of easy birding!

June 8th: A walk in the mountain community of Chinquapin, adjacent to Panthertown and above Lonesome Valley. The walk will be led by Russ Regnery, HPAS President, with assistance by resident Ann Campbell, HPAS Board Member. Chinquapin is a private, gated, conservation-oriented development in Cashiers and our walk will be on the 700 acre Carlton Family conservation easement. This property is available only to groups with prior arrangements. Participants are encouraged to bring a bag lunch to enjoy after birding the trails. Brown Creepers will be the target species of interest today. Meet in the Cashiers Community Center Parking area at 7:30 to carpool up to the community.

June 13th: Thursday: Our annual Owl Prowl, in conjunction with the Highlands Nature Center and featuring the live birds of the Charlotte Raptor Rehab Center, will once again be a popular event. This fun and instructive evening is free, and always a hit with children as well as adults, so bring your flashlights and join us in learning all about raptors which occur in the NC Mountains, and afterwards on a walk in town to see what owls we can

find. The program will begin at 7:30PM in the amphitheater behind the Highlands Nature Center. Parking is very limited, so please do carpool and arrive early for the best seats.

June 15th: A new venue for bird-banding and study with Mark Hopey will be Cowee Mounds, north of Franklin. This lower elevation habitat offers some species not seen in Highlands, and the up close and personal opportunity to participate in gathering vital information on our migrant birds. George Kaye and Brock Hutchins will lead, with everyone meeting in Highlands at the Town Hall Parking lot for 7:30 car-pooling to the site in Franklin. This trip will offer great photographic opportunities, so don't forget your camera! Meeting site in Franklin will be across from the Iotla Recycling Center., approximately 5 miles north of Franklin at the intersection of Hwy. 28 and Sanderstown Rd.

June 22nd: Our joint EcoTour with the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust will visit Sweetwater Farms, a mixed habitat 80+ acre property which is under a conservation easement with the Land Trust. This is a new venue for HPAS walks this year so it will be exciting to see what species we can turn up! Romney Bathurst, HPAS Board Member, will lead, assisted by Kyle Pursel, HCLT Stewardship Director, and Pat Strickland, also a Board Member, in charge of membership for HPAS. As lunch will be part of the trip, HCLT Members should bring \$5 to enjoy the yummy picnic that HCLT will provide. Those who are not yet members may join HCLT by visiting their web site, www.hicashlt.org or calling Julie at 526-1111. Julie will be taking reservations, which are a must in order to plan properly for lunches. Details on meeting place and time will be given when you call to reserve your spot.

June 29th: Paula Gorgolione of the Franklin Bird Club will lead this week's walk along the Franklin Greenway. Romney Bathurst will co-lead, with Michelle Styring assisting. Many of the birds seen down in Franklin do not regularly appear, or do not appear at all, on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau, so this week's walk along the Greenway should be especially interesting. Last year a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was seen, and other possibilities include Yellow-breasted Chat, Common Yellow-throat, and perhaps even more "yellow" things! Meet at the Highlands Town Hall Parking lot at 7:30 sharp for car-pooling to the Macon County Public Library in Franklin.

More Field Trips and outings will be offered in July and August and on through mid-September, so stay tuned for more opportunities to join in the fun!

Brock Hutchins and Romney Bathurst

Membership & Development

Our membership year runs from May 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014, and the renewal forms for this year will be mailed out **April 15th**. Please return the completed renewal form with your check (a copy of the form can also be found on our web page). Remember, if you join our local at the level of FRIEND or higher, we will pay your National Audubon dues for you.

Last year was a great year for increased membership and participation in local Audubon events. Please help keep the momentum going by joining early and participating in our programs and weekly walks. It's educational, fun and a good way to meet new people with similar interests.

The Membership Committee could use several members willing to help greet members and distribute name badges at the monthly programs. If you are interested in helping in this way, please contact me.

Pat Strickland at 828-743-7421

Programs

The Program Committee is in the process of finalizing an interesting line up of programs for the season. As soon as details are available, they will be published on the web site, www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org. More details will also be available at the Annual Meeting, Monday, June 10. If you have suggestions or comments, please contact:
Don Shure at 770-939-9417

Audubon North Carolina Annual Meeting Raleigh, May 31 – June 2

Wake Audubon Society is hosting this year's Audubon NC Annual meeting in Raleigh, Friday May 31 through Sunday, June 2. Included will be a symposium ("North Carolina Grasslands"); field trips (indoor, outdoor, and hands-on), receptions both Friday (at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences) and Saturday nights, with the banquet and awards on Saturday night. Full information about the program and registration forms is available at <http://nc.audubon.org>. The Pearson Society event will precede the Annual Meeting on Thursday afternoon and evening. We hope many of you will be able to attend.

National Audubon Convention Skamania, WA, July 12 – 15

National Audubon Society is hosting its first National convention in 13 years: "Taking Flight Together." The four flyways will convene as One Audubon to recognize our history of shared achievement as we launch into an exciting and challenging future. The convention is an opportunity to connect as a network and to find support, tools, and new inspiration to help turn passion into action for the places and birds we love. Attendees will include members, chapter leaders, board members, and staff from across the country. Included will be four full days of exciting field trips, inspiring speakers, in-depth hands-on workshops, and tens of program options highlighting strategic conservation successes from the four flyways – all at the beautiful Skamania Lodge on the Columbia River. Visit www.audubonconvention.org for the full schedule and registration information

Highlands Plateau Audubon Society Officers

President -- Russ Regnery, 404-558-1085

Secretary – Brock Hutchins 787-1387

Vice - President – Avary Doubleday, 526-8414

Treasurer – Mike Kaiser, 526-5071

Directors and Committee Chairs

Communications – Avary Doubleday

Conservation – Russ Regnery

Education – Ann Campbell

Field Trips – Brock Hutchins

Finance – Mike Kaiser

Hospitality – Dee Andry

Membership & Development – Pat Strickland

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Program – Don Shure

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George Kaye

Kyle Pursel

Michelle Styring

Mary Lou Waas

Glenda Zahner

Newsletter Editor: John Gross

Web Master: Jean McCormick

Audubon NC Board Member – Avary Doubleday



Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

P. O. Box 833

Highlands, NC 28741