



# The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – October 2015

Cashiers – Franklin – Highlands – Scaly Mountain

[www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org](http://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.*

*From the President . . .*

## Changes in Seasons

Fall is full of mixed emotions for many of us as pleasantly warm days and nights slip away to become crisp days and chilly evenings. The exodus of many of our summer resident birds began some time ago; as far as I can tell the ‘race for the door’ began with the male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds sometime in August (and perhaps even earlier). Although I miss the over-the-top, peanut-sized male bravado, the females and their offspring are welcome to stay as long as they care to visit our feeders or to cash-in on the touch-me-nots and lobelias that bloom just in time to help satisfy the nectar needs of the more moderately-paced hummingbirds.

Fall is my most challenging time of year for birding. Of course, some birds now have more muted (read: confusing) plumage and eschew vocalizations that might help attract one’s attention. During the late summer and into the fall, the leaves still hang on the vegetation compounding the challenges to see and identify mostly silent, often obscure migrating birds. On top of that, additional transient migrants from somewhere further north, reshuffle the familiar deck with various unfamiliar avian ‘wild cards’ (e.g., the Cape May Warbler from the spruce forests of Canada that was photographed on the recent Charlie Davis memorial Blue Ridge Parkway outing).

Fall migrants unquestionably add to the excitement, challenge, and occasionally perhaps the frustration, of a middling birder (fall migrating birds are a good reason for going out with a group that includes experienced leaders!). And while I lament the departure of many of our ‘own’ summer-resident species, I also look forward to enjoying the hardcore, winter-resident species that I somehow view as ‘winter stalwart friends’ (e.g., those that will be accounted for during the Christmas Bird Count, December 18) which will spend the cold season with us, instead of risking epic voyages to exotic lands, on delicate wings.

When HPAS reorganized in 2012, one of the modernizations in governance included ‘term limits’ for directors and officers of the chapter (combinations of either 2 or 3 year terms that max out at 6 total years possible). Term limits codify inclusion of ‘new blood’ within an organizational structure, while also enabling new volunteers to foresee finite expectations for duration of service to the group. Part of the 2012 by-laws arbitrarily assigned staggered term limits to the ‘founding fathers/mothers’ to avoid all directors being rotated off at once. Directors are routinely elected by the membership at the September annual meeting and assume office January 1. Officers are subsequently appointed by the board of directors. Participation in committees is not bound by term limits and directors are not required to serve on committees, although many do.

This fall and winter marks something of a turning point for HPAS that has nothing to do with avian migrations. Term limits for two key directors of the reorganized HPAS are approaching. Terms will expire January 1 for directors Avary Doubleday (Vice President and Chairperson of the Communications Committee) and Dr. Don Shure (past President and Chairperson of our Nominations and Leadership Development Committee, and recently of the Program Committee).

Avary has personified what anyone would hope a leader of a volunteer organization might be like. As vice president, she has helped make my job as president easy and kept me out of trouble most of the time (thank you Avary!). She has carefully overseen the many faceted communications needs of the chapter, including, for example, helping review the newsletter; hopefully Avary will continue to contribute in this important committee role. More than any other single person in recent years, Avary has been the organizational ‘glue’ that has helped to hold the HPAS together in its current, successful, reorganized form.

Don Shure, in addition to serving as a past President, until recently utilized his experience as a professional ecologist to help recruit a well-balanced series of program presentations for the chapter that were both educational and typically entertaining. Simultaneously, Don has been involved with personally recruiting most of the new directors and committee chairpersons, at least since the chapter was reorganized. Several of us can testify that Don has been effective at recruiting chapter leadership. As with Avary, we hope that Don will continue to remain actively involved with chapter committees and functions.

Avary and Don have been a large part of the institutional memory of the reorganized HPAS. The chapter owes these two leaders many thanks for all that they have done to make the chapter the enjoyable organization that it is!

During the August annual chapter picnic, while looking around at the picnic tables of happy people, it occurred to me how many of those in attendance (at least half) had joined HPAS within the last few years. Now, as the authors of the reorganized 2012 HPAS begin to rotate off as directors and officers, in two's and three's, please help encourage additional new (as well as returning) persons to assume leadership roles that the chapter has pledged itself to welcome. It's a good, meaningful group to which to contribute/participate!

*Russell Regnery*

## **Birding on the Blue Ridge Parkway**



**The Cape May warbler was among the birds seen on the Parkway.**

*William McReynolds*

On Saturday, September 12, fifteen hardy birders met at 7 a.m. in Highlands and set out with high hopes on the Charlie Davis Memorial Blue Ridge Parkway Outing.

Entering the Parkway at Balsam Gap they traveled south, making stops at several of the overlooks where low clouds did not obscure the view.

The net results for the morning were 26 avian species including sightings of numerous migrating warblers such as Tennessee and Black-throated Green Warblers, flocks of Wild Turkey and a bull elk (!).

The group enjoyed their picnic lunches and shared cookies at the Heintooga Spur picnic area. At the last overlook, the Waterrock Knob overlook, a large flock of Cedar Waxwings was observed resting high up in the trees while gorging on bright red berries in Bird Cherry bushes nearby. The birders were treated to a great view of the hard-to-find Cape May warbler in the same bushes. The exhilarating outing was led by Brock Hutchins.

*William McReynolds*

## **Celebrate Christmas with the birds**



**Join this year's Christmas Bird Count on December 18.**

Calling all members and friends: YOU can be a part of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count tradition, no experience necessary! This citizen science effort has been going on for more than 115 years and provides vital information on bird species numbers each year.

Mark your calendars for Friday, December 18 and come with us as we canvass our 15 mile radius around Highlands for any and all species! We need drivers, counters, checklist-keepers and eyes, above all. We will meet at the Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park, on the end nearest the Catholic and Episcopal Churches (where the new restrooms are) at 7:30 a.m.

After a fun morning, we will meet up at the home of Hillrie and Bev Quin for a delicious chili lunch and morning tallies. Those wishing to carry on

in the afternoon may then regroup and launch again. All you need to do is show up at 7:30 a.m., dress warmly and with rain gear just in case, bring \$5 for lunch, a pair of bins (or we can lend you a pair) and your enthusiasm for birds and their conservation. Just let Romney Bathurst know if you plan to join us, so that we can be sure not to leave you behind! Email [croftess@frontier.com](mailto:croftess@frontier.com) or leave a message at 526-1939.

It's not too soon to make plans for this annual event – and we really do need your help to make it successful and to fulfill our part of Audubon's biggest, worldwide data collection. We may provide only a tiny part of the total numbers, but our input IS important. Plus it's fun too! Merry Christmas to all and to the birds as well!

## Looking toward 2016

The HPAS Board of Directors will be meeting on October 13 to plan for the upcoming year. As part of that, we are asking that some of you consider helping on our Committees. Below are a few of the "jobs" where your help would really be appreciated. Of course, if you have other interests, please contact one of the board members to discuss your ideas!

**Media Liaison for HPAS.** This person will interface with the local media outlets, print and broadcast, to publicize HPAS events. The HPAS Media Liaison will submit via e-mail *already prepared* news releases to newspapers and newsletters on the Highlands Plateau and coordinate the posting of monthly event flyers in Highlands, Cashiers and Franklin. Work with the Communications Committee. Contact Avary Doubleday ([avaryd@juno.com](mailto:avaryd@juno.com)).

**Field Trip Assistants.** These individuals will assist with and/or lead walks for the 2016 season. They will help plan and organize outings, as well assist with the walks (carrying field guides, signing in group members, recording species seen, etc). You can help identify new venues, and if you want to try your hand at leading a walk, that would be welcome! Contact Romney Bathurst ([croftess@frontier.com](mailto:croftess@frontier.com)) or Brock Hutchins ([brockhutchins@bellsouth.net](mailto:brockhutchins@bellsouth.net)) or any Board Member. As the interest in birds and birding grows, the demand for Audubon's leadership grows too, and we need your help to make it all happen!

## Preliminary Findings of Nest Box Project

The data sheets for the nest boxes have now been accumulated from all 50 participants, and will soon be delved into by "the experts." But from a strictly lay-birder's perspective, several notes of interest have surfaced.

First, the boxes were almost exclusively used by three types of birds: Eastern Bluebirds, Carolina Chickadees, and House Wrens. One nest of Tufted Titmice was observed at a home in Highlands.

Second, the Carolina Chickadees built the most nests in the most boxes, and seemed to start doing so early in April, as bits of moss (the main material of their nests) appeared in many boxes.

And thirdly, a few new active nests were found in August, mainly built by House Wrens, whose nests are made from lots of sticks.

We hope to have more "official" data analyzed by the writing of the next HPAS newsletter. And we certainly want to thank the many enthusiastic participants, all of whom seem willing to continue in the project for a second year.

**Nest Boxes Still Available!** There are still six pairs of new nest boxes that are available for volunteers to have on their property to monitor the nesting birds next Spring to September. If you live in or very close to Highlands or Cashiers and want to participate, call Michelle ASAP! 828-743-9670 Each pair will be installed on your property in October, and we ask \$25.00 per pair, which is our cost.

*Michelle Styring*

## New Directors announced

At the Annual Membership Meeting on September 28, you elected six Directors to the Board of HPAS. Two directors who had been appointed by the Board since the last annual meeting will serve through the end of 2017: Mary Jo Askew and Bill Peavey. One new director, Gail Lemiec, will serve a three-year term through the end of 2018. Three directors were reelected for second three-year terms, serving through the end of 2018: Brock Hutchins, George Kaye, and Kyle Pursel. Each in his/her own words:

**Bill Peavey:** My wife Sheila and I came to Highlands as year round residents in 2005. My checkered past has included banking, portfolio management, property management, real estate sales, and automotive collision repair, and I am currently employed at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices/ Meadows Mountain Realty in Highlands. Throughout this journey I have enjoyed a life-long interest in nature which is presently focused on plants and birds. *Bill is currently Program Chair.*

**Gail Limeic:** While originally from Cleveland, OH, I have spent the last ten years as a North Carolina resident. I earned a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Northland College, situated in the Wisconsin northwoods, before traveling to Romania with the Peace Corps. Upon returning to the States, I immersed myself in informal environmental education, marine conservation, and animal training, working with raptors, shorebirds, and small mammals. I have had the good fortune of working for such amazing organizations like Carolina Raptor Center, the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, and Charlotte Nature Museum. My passion for conservation and travel was ignited once again with the enrollment in graduate school at Miami University of Ohio. I traveled to Belize, Hawaii, and Baja, Mexico before completing an M.A. in Zoology this past December. In addition to my work at Highlands Nature Center, I am also an adjunct professor for Miami University of Ohio, facilitating online courses and summer field courses in Baja, Mexico. *Gail will serve as a member at large.*

**Mary Jo Askew:** My husband Jim and I divide our time between Highlands and Stuart, FL, where I grew up. I love the outdoors, hiking, tennis, kayaking, and travel. Both children and two grands live in Northern VA. My husband Jim is a dahlia/tomato grower here and a fisherman in Florida. I like to think of myself as a “Yes Let's” girl and sometimes this attitude gets me in trouble. The first time I saw a Pileated Woodpecker, I was hooked on birding. *Mary Jo is currently co-chair of the Membership Committee.*

**George Kaye:** My wife Connie and I spend our summers in Franklin and winters in Tampa, FL. We spent several wonderful summers in Highlands until we moved to Franklin. We like that we live close to the Appalachian and Bartram trails here in Franklin, just to name a few of the many nature related opportunities. Highlands Audubon is one of the most effective groups I have ever joined, as well as one of the friendliest. I have enjoyed serving as a Member At Large, and member of the Conservation Committee. I enjoy installing and monitoring nestboxes, among other activities.

**Kyle Pursel:** I live in Sapphire with my wife Sarah. We work at the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, where I am the Stewardship Coordinator. With HPAS, I am the Conservation Committee chair. Interesting fact: I am a herpetologist by training, with a particular fondness for turtles, snakes and salamanders.

**Brock Hutchins:** Patty and I have lived in Highlands for 15 years as summer residents. I have been on the board in one position or another for all that time. The most enjoyable duty is to be on the field trip committee. I love birding and helping others develop their birding skills. I am also Treasurer, which is a natural since I like numbers, too. We spend the winter in Peachtree City, GA, which is only 160 miles from Highlands, but the birds we see can be very different from Highlands because of the lower elevation.

## 2015 Members of Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

Special thanks to all our Local Chapter members. Your generous support of our growing organization has provided funding for expanded activities in our mountain community.

The list reflects payments received through September 17, 2015.

### ***Benefactor (\$1000)***

Virginia Dial

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**Vice - President** – Avary Doubleday, 828-526-8414

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**Conservation** – Kyle Pursel

**Education** – Ann Campbell

**Field Trips** – Romney Bathurst

**Finance** – Brock Hutchins

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**Membership & Development** – Mary Jo Askew and Sarah Pursel

**Nominating & Leadership Development** – Don Shure  
**Program** – Bill Peavey

**At Large** – George Kaye, Conservation  
Michelle Styring, Nest Box Project  
Glenda Zahner, Education  
Pat Strickland, Communications

**Newsletter Editor:** Jessica Webb

**Web Master:** Jean McCormick



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