



The Mountain Warbler

Newsletter of the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society – August 2017

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.

From the President . . . Hummingbirds exemplify some of our concerns and hopes

As recently as the beginning of June, there were questions floating around our community about where were the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that weren't being seen in the anticipated numbers at local hummingbird feeders? In partial response, some people noted that there were a few hummers coming to at least some feeders, and that this spring was an especially good year for many of our native flowering plants, which might have provided attractive alternative sources of carbohydrates for epicurean hummingbirds. Reasonable explanations notwithstanding, several of us were concerned for our spring hummingbirds.

The observation of apparent diminished numbers of hummingbirds early in the season was a reasonable occasion to contemplate why this might have been. The possible impacts of inclement weather during hummingbird migrations to and from Central America come to mind. Decreasing suitable winter habitat for many of our tropical migrants seems to be recurrent theme. Do pesticides play a role decreasing hummingbird numbers? Perhaps globally warming temperatures might be impacting hummingbird migration/behavior in some indirect manner? The potential hazards that hummingbirds face during long-range migrations, and their dependence on multiple compromised habitats for survival, are likely analogous to challenges that most of our migratory birds encounter every year.

However (and thankfully), whatever the root cause(s) for diminished hummingbird sightings at some feeders earlier this year, they are clearly abundant at our feeders now! Probably some of our recent hummingbird consumers represent young birds recently fledged from North American nests. And by now some of the hummers are already beginning to migrate south again and are stopping off in our neighborhood on their epic migrations towards Central America. Of course, we also know from past experience that there is enough variation in hummingbird travel itineraries to expect to see hummers well into the fall and even after the first frost (keep those feeders refreshed!). At the very least, the resurgence in observed hummingbird activity in mid-summer is a source of optimism that these tiny birds have a significant measure of resiliency that continues to bless our environment with their presence.

What do increased hummingbird sightings have to do with the current chapter president's view of the future of HPAS? As has been discussed in previous HPAS newsletters, we are a small, partly seasonal, community with a limited pool of persons who are willing and able to volunteer and contribute to committee and other chapter leadership roles. Over several years one significant success of our chapter was the ability to recruit new leadership at almost the same rate as previous leaders have moved on (for one reason or another); all the while HPAS has maintained a continuous series of seasonally active programs. More recently, it has been becoming clear that HPAS may have been overly confident in our ability to indefinitely maintain a revolving, active, volunteer leadership structure. Now it is time for new ideas and there is a clear need for additional chapter participation. This summer and fall the HPAS board of directors will be considering how our group can return next season with core activities that hopefully will benefit our community, membership, birds, and our environment. The board of directors, along with any interested members, will be considering how best to re-emphasize (e.g., scale back) some chapter activities to result in organizational sustainability that more realistically reflects our current, limited volunteer base. If you have suggestions for what HPAS should try to emphasize in the future, and importantly how such activities could be coordinated, the HPAS board of directors is 'all ears.' I'm confident that, after careful consideration and your help, HPAS will return next season as a viable community organization, as it has for the past 20 years, in time to witness the spring migration, including our irreplaceable hummingbirds.

A favorite rallying slogan of the President of National Audubon, David Yarnold, is "You are what hope looks like to a bird." I'll be slightly more abstruse and suggest, "Hummingbirds can be what hope looks like to our chapter."

Russell Regnery



WCU natural resources management major, Brooks Churn, receives a Harris's Hawk that was flown by Peter Kipp-DuPont, falconer.

Community Involvement

More than 600 people attended the 14th Annual Mountain Wildlife Days weekend in Sapphire Valley on July 14-15. The first event was a bird walk at the Cashiers Commons led by our President, Russ Regnery, who seemed to attract birds to come in for a close-up view for the participants.

On Saturday, Russ was the master of ceremonies for the all-day line-up of wildlife experts showing animals such as birds of prey, a wolf, a ground hog, reptiles, as well as some exotics.

HPAS continues to value collaborative efforts with other organizations to promote wildlife awareness and education.

Ann Campbell

Join HPAS for the summer picnic

The annual HPAS summer picnic will be at the Recreation Center Pavilion in Highlands, at 600 N 4th Street on Sunday, August 13 with set-up beginning at 5 p.m. and dinner at 6 p.m. Bring a covered dish. Fried chicken and soft drinks are provided. Shiela Peavey is organizing the event, and you can email her at sheilapeavey@gmail.com or call her at (828) 586-9610.

Volunteer with HPAS

Without volunteers there would be no 'grass roots' to most community organizations and, in the example of a local Audubon chapter, there would be no organization at all. HPAS has a healthy organizational structure that encourages turnover of leadership of directors and committee chairpersons after completion of several years of service. The 'price we pay' for healthy leadership turnover is that the organization must routinely find new volunteer leaders. We must cultivate our own homegrown leadership.

HPAS directors and committees have a good time working together. If you aren't already, please consider volunteering to the long-term viability of HPAS. Let us know if you are interested.

We are recruiting for the following leadership positions: Vice President, Chairs for the Field Trips Committee, the Nominating & Leadership Development Committee, the Hospitality Committee, the Programs Committee, and additional active Directors.

Russell Regnery

HPAS Outings, Activities & Programs

Visit www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org or call 828-526-1939. All events are free. Birders of all levels are welcome.

Aug. 13 - Annual HPAS summer picnic at the Recreation Center Pavilion in Highlands at 600 N 4th Street. Come at 6 p.m. with a covered dish. Meat will be provided. Set up at 5 p.m.

Aug. 22 - Birds & Beer (or wine or tea) at the Ugly Dog in Highlands. Spirited discussion of birds and birding starting at 5:30 p.m. and continuing with sandwiches and other pub grub.

Aug. 29 – “The American Bald Eagle” a dramatic PBS Nature Series film, depicting our national bird, at 7 p.m. in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library, 554 Main Street in Highlands.

Sept. 12 – “Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge: Conserving some of the Mountain’s Rarest Places and Species,” a talk by Susan Cameron, wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, at 7 p.m. in the rear meeting room of the Hudson Library, 554 Main Street in Highlands.

Sept. 16- Annual Charlie Davis Memorial Blue Ridge Parkway Outing searching for migrating warblers, vireos, thrushes and raptors. Meet at Founders Park in Highlands at 7:00 a.m. or Cashiers Rec. Center at 7:30 a.m. Roadside birding, some easy walking; loaner binoculars available. Please pack a light lunch, as we will stop at a scenic spot for a picnic and more birding before returning mid-afternoon. Bring water and your camera.

Sept. 18- Hawk Watch at Whiteside Mountain if weather and winds are suitable. Call Brock Hutchins, 828-787-1387 or 404-295-0663 to join the email notification list.

Sept. 26- Annual Chapter meeting and presentation; Michelle Ruigrok & Bill Peavey describe the Audubon Camp at Hog Island, Maine at 7:00 p.m. at the Highlands Civic Center, 600 N 4th Street.

Mark your calendars:

The Christmas Count will be Friday, Dec. 15 – it’s not too early to plan to join us, so mark your calendar for a fun outing!

Bird walk to Old Ranger Station

Russ led a pleasant bird walk at the Old Ranger Station in Highlands on Saturday, Aug. 8 and there were eight participants who were from out of town joining the group. Many birds were spotted. Perhaps the highlight was an Indigo Bunting, an always special, vibrantly blue tree topper. We were fortunate to see a Cedar Waxwing, complete with his black mask. Russ explained that this bird has a bit of red on him which is actually wax! There was also the usual mix of warblers including a Black and White, Black throated Green, Hooded, and others.



Officers

President -- Russ Regnery, 404-558-1085
Vice - President – Bill Peavey, 828-369-1553

Secretary – vacant
Treasurer – Brock Hutchins, 770-486-3715

Directors and Committee Chairs

Communications – Michelle Ruigrok
Conservation – Kyle Pursel
Education – Ann Campbell
Field Trips – vacant
Finance – Brock Hutchins
Hospitality – Sheila Peavey
Membership & Development – Mary Jo Askew and Sarah Pursel
Nest Boxes – Michelle Styring
Newsletter Editor: Jessica Webb

Nominating & Leadership Development – vacant
Program – Bill Peavey

At Large – Romney Bathurst Glenda Zahner
 Pat Strickland Jeremy Hyman
 Mary Palmer Dargan
 Olga Milenkaya
 George Kaye
Web Master: Jean McCormick



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