

# HIGH COUNTRY HOOTS

High Country Audubon Society - Serving Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Watauga, and Wilkes Counties

## JOIN US FOR THE HCAS ANNUAL MEETING AND POTLUCK



The 2008 HCAS Annual Meeting  
Photo by Monty Combs

High Country Audubon Society's Annual Meeting and Potluck will be held July 21 at Lees-McRae College Field Station.

Social time and voting will begin at 5:15 p.m. The voting will be done by ballot and is for Treasurer, Vice President, and two vacant board positions. At 5:30 p.m. the group will go on a bird walk around the Field Station property led by Dr. Stewart Skeate or one of his students.

After working up appetites on the walk, the potluck meal will begin at 6:30 p.m. Not only can our members bird, but they sure can cook! Those attending are asked to bring their favorite side dish or entrée, along with their own plate, silverware, cup, and napkin. The HCAS hopes to make this a "no waste" event.

The annual meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. and will include a "year in review" PowerPoint presentation that chronicles the past year's activities and

birds in photographs. This was a big hit at last year's meeting! Jesse Pope and Brenda Combs are compiling the images. If anyone is interested in contributing images for the photo presentation they are asked to send them via e-mail to Jesse at [highcountrybirder@yahoo.com](mailto:highcountrybirder@yahoo.com).

The agenda also includes a conservation minute, business update, and the voting in of new officers and board members.

We hope that everyone comes out and joins the group for good birds, good food, and lots of laughs! We will also take the time to thank everyone who has helped make the chapter a success over the past year.

### Directions to Field Station

- Coming from Tynecastle, turn left at Banner Elk stoplight on to 194 South
- Travel for 3 miles and turn left on Puckett Rd. If you go past Elk Valley Baptist Church or Eagles Nest you have gone too far.
- Travel for .2 miles. After you cross a one-lane bridge, immediately take a left onto a gravel driveway.

Continue through the gates to the cedar-sided, green-roofed field station

## JULY FIELD TRIP TO ELK KNOB STATE PARK

Those participating in the July field trip will venture to Elk Knob State Park for some bird watching and volunteer work.

Elk Knob State Park is a 1,800 acre state park in Watauga County.

Opened in 2003, it is one of North Carolina's newer state parks.

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July/August - 2009

Volume 1, Issue 3

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

See Page 2 for More Details

July		
18	Elk Knob State Park Field Trip	All Day
21	Annual Meeting	5:15 p.m.
August		
18	Monthly Meeting	6:30 p.m.
22	Riverbend Hummingbird Field Trip	All day
September		
4-5	Daniel Boone Days	
15	Monthly Meeting	6:30 p.m.
17	Mahogany Rock Field Trip	All Day
26	Ridge Junction & Mt. Mitchell Field Trip	All Day

A \$5 donation is requested with field trip attendance.

All events and meeting times are subject to change.

For updated information please visit  
<http://www.geocities.com/hcaudubon>.

## FUN FACTS

### Orchard Oriole



- Only loosely territorial, the Orchard Oriole is often described as a "semicolonial" species in areas of prime habitat, but it is relatively solitary in marginal habitats. In areas of dense nesting, one tree may contain multiple nests.
- The Orchard Oriole is a rather late spring migrant, but it heads back southward quickly. Some orioles may return to their wintering grounds as early as mid-July.
- The Orchard Oriole, the smallest North American oriole, do nest in the High Country along river corridors.
- The rich chestnut color of the adult male can be so dark that he may appear all black before you get your binoculars on him.

Info and picture found on <http://www.birds.cornell.edu>.

## JULY FIELD TRIP CONT.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the land was under threat of being developed for summer homes. A group of concerned citizens, led by the Nature Conservancy and land owners teamed together to purchase Elk Knob and deed it to the State of North Carolina as a nature preserve, and later a state park.

Elk Knob and Rittle Knob, which are now part of Elk Knob State Park, are ecologically rich sites that host diverse and rare plant species such as Gray's Lily, Rattlesnake Root, Flame Azalea, Purple Fringed Orchid and



Elk Knob State Park  
(Photo courtesy of [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov))

Trailing Wolfsbane.

Northern hardwood forests grow at Elk Knob State Park. This type of forest consists of Sugar Maple, American Beech, Yellow Buckeye, and Yellow Birch. The trees that grow near the summits of Rittle and Elk Knobs have been stunted by the low temperatures, high elevation, and high winds. Trees that are just a few feet high can be well over one hundred years old.

The forests at Elk Knob State Park provide a habitat for a number of woodland species including a breeding colony of ravens, the American Black Bear, Bobcat, White-tailed deer, Wild Turkeys. Since the park is largely undeveloped, these species have lived in an environment that has been largely left undisturbed by man. Development that has taken place at the park has been to

minimize ecological damage.

The group will meet at 7:30 a.m. at New Market Center in Boone near the Cashpoints ATM to carpool. The park gates open at 8:00 a.m. and upon arrival the field trip will begin with some birding along the first mile of the summit trail.

At 9:15 a.m. Elk Knob Park Ranger Andy Sicard will

join the group and lead it through the volunteer work of building a trail. Rest assured! There will be trail maintenance jobs for all ages and abilities!

Please bring your own gloves, study shoes, snacks, water, binoculars, guides and lunch for this trip.

Come out and join us in making history in developing the summit trail at Elk Knob State Park!

### High Country Audubon Society Board

**Jesse Pope** - President, Field Trips & Social Events Chair

**Anita Clemmer** - Vice President

**Janet Palmer** - Secretary/Treasurer

**Bob Cherry** - Conservation & Education Chair

**Bettie Bond**

**John Bond**

**Martha Cutler**

**Mary Carol Ochipa**

**Stewart Skeate**

**Miles Tager**

**Sue Wells**

## AUGUST EVENT DETAILS

### Riverbend Hummingbird Field Trip

Saturday, August 22 - All Day

Those interested in attending will meet in Boone and carpool to Riverbend Park in Catawba County. Dwayne Martin will conduct a Hummingbird Banding Workshop.

### August Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, August 18 - 6:30 p.m.

La Quinta Inn, Boone

Member presentation on birding trips abroad by Jackie and Ray Parsavand and Rosalind Pevsner.

**Is there a program topic you would like to hear about?**

**Let us know!**



**High Country  
Audubon Society**

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E-mail: [highcountrybirder@yahoo.com](mailto:highcountrybirder@yahoo.com)



### HCAS Member Photo Gallery



Roseate  
Spoonbill

By Mary  
Carol  
Ochipa

## BUYING BINOCULARS



### Did you know that birding is the number one sport in America?

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there are currently 51.3 million birders in the United States alone, and this number continues to grow!

Binoculars and optics companies are very aware of this growing sport too!

It's important to do your homework on all the brands and features before making the big purchase.

This is an excellent guide for deciding on a new pair of binoculars, especially if you are thinking of making a big investment in the near future. Enjoy!

**General requirements:** The problem for most beginning birders is simply finding the bird. Look for binoculars that have a wide enough field of view to locate a bird and then follow its movements. The instrument must provide a bright enough image to allow you to distinguish subtle features, particularly in dim light, and also focus quickly so that you can get a sharp image of a fast-moving bird. If you wear glasses, look for binoculars that have a long enough eye relief to provide an unrestricted view.

**Specifications:** Binoculars are described by two numbers, 8x32 or

10x40, or 8x21 for example. The first number tells you the magnification while the second tells you the size of the objective lens, in millimeters. Binoculars, that have a bigger ratio between the magnification and the objective lens size will always give a sharper, brighter image than ones with a smaller ratio. (For instance, 8x42 provides a brighter, sharper image than an 8x32 or 10x42.) Most birders agree that 7 or 8 power is about right for most birding. We generally recommend against purchasing 10 power binoculars because they have a smaller field of view and a dimmer image. Binoculars with a bright, wide field will also be much easier to hold steady; higher magnification also magnifies the movement of your hands. You may want to consider purchasing mid-size binoculars, such as 8x32s since they are bright enough and easy to carry and pack, and may have a field of view as good as many 8x42s.

**Pricing:** You get what you pay for. Always spend as much as you can afford when buying binoculars; you will never be sorry to have purchased high quality binoculars. Pay attention to what birders around you are using. Better yet, ask to look through their binoculars and question them about the pros and cons. Never buy a binocular before trying the

actual instrument you plan to purchase. You need to be certain that you are comfortable using a particular brand and model, and individual instruments do vary within a brand and model.

**Get Comfortable With Your Binoculars:** Before you go birding, make sure you know how to use your binoculars - practice! Don't try to locate the bird with your binoculars. First find the bird with your unaided eye, then keep your eyes on the bird while you raise the binoculars to your face. Focus and enjoy.



Full-sized Adult Binoculars



Mid-sized Equinox Binoculars



Compact Adult Binoculars

Information courtesy of the National Audubon Society website:  
[http://www.audubon.org/bird/at\\_home/bird\\_watching/binoculars.shtml](http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/bird_watching/binoculars.shtml)

### Binocular Don'ts:

- Don't buy compact, or pocket-sized binoculars (typically 8x21 or 10x21) as your primary pair for birding. The size and weight are attractive, but no matter how good the optics, compacts provide a lower quality image than mid or full-size binoculars. Another drawback is that most compacts have a narrow field of view, which makes it very difficult to locate and follow birds.
- Don't buy zoom binoculars. Expert birders report them as being inferior.
- Don't seek advice on buying optics from non-birders. Hikers, hunters, and boaters have different needs than birders. Looking at birds is not the same as looking at other wildlife. Pocket binoculars are fine for looking across a savannah at an elephant or a cheetah, but they are not suitable for birding. Marine binoculars provide a sharp, bright image, but are too big and heavy to carry around all day.
- Don't buy binoculars until you have tried them. Make sure they feel comfortable in your hands. Look through them and be sure you get a clear, unobstructed view. Different models suit different people, and each instrument varies. If ordering by mail or online, make sure that you can exchange them.

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

An annual membership to the High Country Audubon Society is \$10 per person and due June 1 of each year. Membership and support gives you access to the group's listserv and the HCAS e-newsletter High Country Hoots. Mail check and information (name, address, telephone number, e-mail) to:

High Country Audubon Society

Attention: Janet Palmer

PO Box 3746