

HIGH COUNTRY HOOTS

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

May/June - 2011

Volume 3, Issue 2



A TALE OF BEVERLY AND THE BURROWING OWLS

One of HCAS's newest members, Beverly Saltonstall, will give a presentation on Burrowing Owls during the Monthly Meeting on May 17. The owls live in her yard in Cape Coral, FL.

Saltonstall is a retired registered nurse who first saw a Burrowing Owl when she moved to Cape Coral. She was immediately hooked.

Saltonstall is an advocate for preserving the owl's habitat and has given many lectures on behalf of Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife (CCFW), the organization that is actively working to make sure that Cape Coral's Burrowing Owls do not become endangered. They presently have the status of "special concern" from

Florida Fish and Wildlife.

Beverly has a website (www.welovebirds.org/profile/BeverlySaltonstall) that includes a webcam of the owls that live in her yard, articles about Burrowing Owls, videos, photos and information about the 10th Annual CCFW Burrowing Owls Festival which is scheduled for February 25, 2012. There are also links to adopt an owl, find out about tours and buy a book or field guide.

Join us May 17 at the Agricultural Extension Conference Room at 6:30 p.m. where we will learn all about the Burrowing Owls of Cape Coral and the remarkable woman who is doing her best to help establish and preserve their precious habitat!



FIRST ANNUAL SPRING BIRD COUNT ON GRANDFATHER MTN

Written by Bob Cherry

Just in case doing the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), the Wilson Creek IBA point counts, and the Great Backyard Bird Count isn't enough, we're pleased to invite you to join us for HCAS's first annual Spring Bird Count.

Spring Bird Counts are held in several locations in North Carolina (and in many other states) including the Balsam Mountains and the Durham area. These counts are similar to the CBC in that they are a citizen science project that provides information about birds in a specified area. In this

case the birds are spring breeders and possibly some late migrants.

Count areas can be any designated areas such as a county, a state park or an IBA. We are setting ours up centered around Grandfather Mountain with the boundaries being the Blue Ridge Parkway to the south, US 221 to the west, NC 105 to the north and Holloway Mountain Road to the east. As with CBCs this location will stay the same each year the count is done.

Continued on Page 2

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May		
4	Garlic Pull at Valle Crucis Park	11 a.m.
5	Trout Lake Field Trip	8:30 a.m.
13	Grandfather Mtn. Spring Bird Count	All Day
17	Monthly Meeting at Watauga County Ag. Conference Center	6:30 p.m.
19-22	Audubon NC Annual Meeting	

June		
9	Hampton Creek Cove, TN Field Trip	7:30 a.m.
11	Hampton Creek Cove, TN Field Trip	7:30 a.m.
14	Beech Mountain Field Trip	8:30 a.m.
21	Monthly Meeting at W. Kerr Scott Environmental Education Center	6:30 p.m.

July		
15	Beech Mtn. Birding Challenge Awards Dinner	6 p.m.
16	Bluff Mountain Field Trip	TBD
19	HCAS Annual Meeting @ LMC Field Station	5:30 p.m.

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

All events and meeting times are subject to change.

For updated information please visit

<http://highcountryaudubon.org>.

FUN FACTS

Blackburnian Warbler



- No other North American warbler has an orange throat.
- The Blackburnian Warbler is territorial on its breeding grounds and solitary in the winter. It forms flocks only during migration.
- Although the Blackburnian Warbler does not associate with other birds while it is nesting, it will join foraging flocks of chickadees, kinglets, and nuthatches after the young fledge. The warbler will follow the mixed flock with its begging young. The begging of the warbler chicks can even attract chickadees.
- Breeds in mature coniferous and mixed coniferous/deciduous forests. Winters in montane forests.

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

SPRING BIRD COUNT CONT.

This year the Spring Bird Count will be held Friday, May 13. This is the first day of Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation's Naturalist Weekend and we will take advantage of additional birders being in the area. There will also be an Owl Prowl that night that is part of the Naturalist Weekend. Almost all of our breeders should be back by then, plus a few late migrants, such as Mourning, Bay-breasted and Palm Warblers.

If you'd like to join us please let Bob Cherry (cherryleigh@bellsouth.net) or Jesse Pope (highcountrybirder@yahoo.com) know so that we can assign areas before the big day. Some of the portions of our count area are only accessible by trails requiring a fair amount of hiking so please consider your physical condition when volunteering for these areas. We'll plan on meeting someplace at the end of the day to collect data, get reports on how things went and to share stories of the day's events.

Please contact Pope if you are interested in the Friday night Owl Prowl.

BEECH MOUNTAIN'S AUDUBON BIRDING CHALLENGE

The first Audubon Birding Challenge to take place within Beech Mountain town limits will be June 6 - July 15. The cost is \$10 per registrant and includes a scavenger hunt in which the participants will receive a bird checklist, pamphlet guide and water bottle.



The Awards Ceremony on July 15 will be at 6 p.m. and will feature a presentation by Curtis Smalling, a dinner, and an award presentation of a plaque and prize pack. The winner will be determined by the number of birds that are checked off of the participant's list. If multiple participants complete the list the award will be presented to the one who completed his/her list first.

HCAS will have a bird walk on Beech Mountain as part of the Birding Challenge on Tuesday, June 14. A carpool group will meet at New Market Cash Points in Boone at 7:15 a.m. and will journey up to Buckeye Recreational Area to begin birding at 8:30 a.m.

For more information on the Birding Challenge please contact Brie Powell at bpowell@townofbeech.com or 828-387-3003, ext. 223.



HCAS Member Photos



Canada Warbler

By Richard Gray

Plush-crested Jay (Argentina)

By Martha Cutler



High Country Audubon Society Board

Anita Clemmer - President

Bob Cherry - Vice President, Conservation Chair, & Event Chair for Audubon North Carolina Annual Meeting

Brenda Combs - Secretary

Doris Ratchford - Treasurer

Jesse Pope - Field Trips & Social Events Chair

Janet Palmer - Membership Chair

Rosalind Pevsner - Education Chair

Donald Mullaney

Mary Carol Ochipa

Bettie Bond

Martha Cutler

High Country Hoots is published six times a year by the High Country Audubon Society, a chapter of National Audubon. Local members receive the newsletter via electronic mail. It is also archived on <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/highcountryaudubon>.



High Country Audubon Society

PO Box 3746

Boone, NC 28607

<http://highcountryaudubon.org>

E-mail: highcountrybirder@yahoo.com

HCAS Happenings

Weekday Birding

- Wednesday, May 4 @ 8:30 a.m.

The Wednesday morning bird walk with Curtis Smalling at Valle Crucis Park will be followed by the 2nd Annual Garlic Mustard Weed Pull. Blue Ridge Conservancy will be joining the group to lend a hand in the efforts to eradicate this prolific invasive plant at the park. Bring a pair of gloves and spend a little time to make a big difference!

- Thursday, May 5 @ 8:30 a.m.

Martha Cutler will lead the group to Trout Lake. Let Martha (curford@skybest.com) know if you need to carpool from Boone.

- Thursday, June 9 @ 7:30 a.m.

Field trip to Hampton Creek Cove, TN with Anita Clemmer (anclemmer@att.net). Hampton Creek Cove is a 693-acre natural area located in Carter County outside of the town of Roan Mountain, near Roan Mountain State Park. In 2005 the National Audubon Society designated the area as an IBA to help preserve Golden-winged Warbler habitat. The group will meet at the New Market Cash Points at 7:30 a.m. to carpool.

AUDUBON NC'S ANNUAL MEETING IN BLOWING ROCK

Everything has been set into motion for the Audubon North Carolina Annual Meeting at the Blowing Rock Conference Center May 19-22.

With Bob Cherry coordinating the event, HCAS has stayed on schedule and is getting ready to host the event. Speakers for the symposiums are scheduled, entertainment for the reception has been booked, field trips are planned out, and many other details have been discussed and addressed.

Your Steering Committee consists of Bob Cherry, Anita Clemmer, Jesse Pope, Bettie Bond and Landis Wofford.

The Registration Committee is headed up by Brenda Combs and Janet and Richard Paulette are assisting her. Janet Palmer is in charge of Hospitality with the help of Betsy Murrelle,

Martha Cutler, and Betsy Wauters. Jesse Pope and Field Trip Committee Chair Martha Cutler have been planning the field trips. Landis Wofford is conducting the silent auction and has given valuable advice in other areas as well.

The High Country Water Media Society will be displaying and selling some of their art relating to birds during the event.

A huge THANK YOU goes out to all HCAS members involved in this project and to all who plan to help out and attend the Annual Meeting.

We encourage all HCAS members to join us in welcoming North Carolina's Audubon members to our beautiful area in May!

For more information on the event visit <http://nc.audubon.org/news-events>.

JUNE MEETING AT W. KERR SCOTT

June's monthly meeting will be held at W. Kerr Scott's Environmental Education Center in Wilkes County on June 21. Natural Resource Specialist Brad Carey will be doing a program on bird songs and how to recognize local birds by sound.

The Environmental Education Center is a joint project of the Friends of W. Kerr Scott Lake and the US Army Corps of Engineers covering a 3,800 square foot space in the lower level of the Visitor Center.

Programs that the Center had scheduled this year included The Great Backyard Bird Count with bird feeder building workshops and a composting program at a later date. The Center has been opened to the public just this spring.

The group will meet at the New Market Cash Points to carpool down the mountain at 5:30 p.m. and arrive at W. Kerr Scott at 6:30 p.m. Get to know this exciting spot as a new birding destination and to explore the outdoors down in Wilkes County with us!

GLOBAL WARMING IS CHANGING BIRD MIGRATION

This article is from RedOrbit News and can be found at www.redorbit.com/news/display/?id=1853452.

The results of genetic studies on migratory birds substantiate the theory that in the case of a continued global warming, and within only a few generations, migratory birds will - subject to strong selection and microevolution - at first begin to fly shorter distances and at a later stage, stop migrating, and will thus become so-called "residents." In a selection experiment with blackcaps from southwest Germany, Francisco Pulido and Peter Berthold at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Radolfzell were able to show that first non-migratory birds are to be found in a completely migratory bird population after only two generations of directional selection for lower migratory activity. The strong evolutionary reduction in migration distance found in this study is in line with the expected adaptive changes in bird migration in response to environmental alterations caused by climatic change. (The Proceeds of the National Academy of Science, PNAS, April 5, 2010)

For generations, humans have been watching flocks of migrating birds flying to their winter quarters in the autumn, and awaiting their loud songs announcing their happy return in the spring. The timing of their migration is adjusted to the

availability of resources, such as food and habitats, in the stopover areas as well as in the non-breeding and breeding areas. For migratory birds it is essential to be in the right place at the right time.

For some years, it has been possible to demonstrate using data collected in the wild that some species of migratory birds respond to the increase in temperature and to the subsequent changes in the environment. The blackcap is one of the species where changes in migratory behavior have been most consistent. Today, blackcaps return to their breeding sites earlier, lay their eggs earlier, and leave us later in the autumn. One population even established a new wintering area in the British Isles, instead of flying all the way to Spain. Because of its large genetic variation, the researchers expected rapid adaptation to altered environmental conditions in this species, which is a model for investigating the evolution of bird migration.

The scientists at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology wanted to find out what the mechanisms were for adjusting to global warming, whether there were measurable changes in migratory behavior within a period with a strong temperature increase, and whether these changes, above all the reduced migratory distance, were an individual adjustment to

Continued on Page 4

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: Membership Dues
PO Box 3746
Boone, NC 28607

GLOBAL WARMING CONT.

altered environmental conditions, or whether the genetic composition of the populations would change.

During the period 1988 - 2001, which were years with particularly high temperatures, blackcap nestlings were taken from their nests each year (757 birds in total) and reared by hand in the lab. The seasonal changes in light - dark transition were simulated and the migratory restlessness of the inexperienced young birds was measured in autumn. The duration of their restless behavior during the night, i.e. the fluttering and hopping along the perch corresponded approximately to the duration of the light to their winter quarters.

The birds that were taken from their natural habitat during these 14 years showed a significant reduction in their migratory activity. In their natural habitat this would be equivalent to a shortening of flying distance. This reduction, as the researchers were able to prove,

was based on a change in the genetic composition of the population, i.e. evolution.

In a second experiment, the scientists simulated the selection process they had observed in nature in the laboratory, but in "time lapse." The birds with the least migratory activity and their offspring were paired over four generations. In order to avoid inbreeding, the researchers paired 50% of this line with birds in the natural habitat that showed a particularly weak migratory restlessness. After two generations, the first "resident" birds were already to be found in this population. Hence, directional selection for lower migratory activity leads to the evolution of partial migratory populations and, finally, to populations that do not leave their breeding areas at all.

The advantages for the birds are obvious: The shortening of migration distance saves energy and time. Moreover, because shorter days, as experienced in more northern win-

tering areas, induce an advancement of migratory activity and reproduction, birds migrating shorter distances will occupy the best breeding territories and may produce multiple broods in a year.

"We assume that the reduction in migration distance is the first and most significant evolutionary mechanism that migratory birds have for adapting to changed climatic conditions," explains Francisco Pulido. "For birds that migrate short to average distances of approximately 1,000 km, and in which migratory behavior is genetically determined, as is the case with most songbirds, this can be a successful strategy for survival. However, for long-distance migrants, for which successful migration will depend on overcoming ecological barriers such as desert or sea, this mechanism of adaptation cannot work, as a reduction of migration distance would mean spending the winter in a hostile environment, in which they cannot not survive."

HEATHER STARK JOINS AUDUBON NORTH CAROLINA AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Audubon North Carolina welcomes Heather Starck as the new Vice President and Executive Director of the nonprofit conservation organization. Starck has been the Director of the National Audubon Society's Grange Insurance Audubon Center in Columbus, Ohio, since 2004. In her new position, Starck replaces former executive director Chris Canfield, who became National Audubon Society's Vice President for Gulf of Mexico Conservation and Restoration in September 2010.

"I am delighted that Heather has joined Audubon North Carolina as Executive Director," said Joe Bearden, Chairman of Audubon NC's Board of Trustees. "I look forward to seeing her commitment to birds, conservation, and Audubon in action. Her experiences will serve her well in this key leadership position."

"My journey in the conservation field has been a great preparation to lead Audubon North Carolina," said Starck. "As state director I will combine my passion for bird conservation and engaging people with my experience as a leader and with fundraising. I am honored to join such an amazing team of people and continue my career with Audubon."

Starck led efforts to create the new Grange Insurance Audubon Center, including developing the vision and business plan, completing a \$14.5M capital campaign, managing design and construction of a LEED



Gold certified 18,000-square-foot center, and assembling a talented staff that is winning awards for innovation in program design. All of the Center's programs are directly working to meet conservation outcomes from the conservation plan developed for the Scioto River-Greenlawn Important Bird Area.

Starck played a prominent role in the community of Columbus, Ohio, serving on Mayor Coleman's Green Team and Young Professionals Commission. She recently completed a fellowship for Emerging Women Leaders of Columbus and has served on a variety of task forces and host committees. New Audubon President and CEO, David Yarnold, selected Ms. Starck to serve on a steering committee of 12 people to draft a new strategic plan for the organization.

Starck began her career with National Audubon Society in 2000 when she managed the Everglades Education Center for Audubon of Florida. Working with students from the urban core of Miami, Starck and her team led field study programs in Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge, Everglades National Park, Biscayne Bay National Park, and John Pennekamp State Park.

Ms. Starck received her Bachelors Degree from the University of North Carolina - Wilmington. She spent several years working on marine biology initiatives, including stints at the Miami Seaquarium and the Mote Marine Laboratory, where she worked on shark tagging studies and dolphin surveys. Ms. Starck also spent two years managing the Monteverde Butterfly Garden in Costa Rica. Stark is based at Audubon North Carolina's headquarters in Chapel Hill.

Article taken from <http://nc.audubon.org>.