

HIGH COUNTRY HOOTS



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

President's Message: Staying Young

By Bob Cherry

As you bird with others, whether it's an HCAS trip or just with some friends, have you noticed that there aren't a lot of young birders out there? Maybe someone in their 40's, but anything younger than that is like seeing a Blackburnian Warbler in January. The HCAS Board of Trustees noticed too and decided to do something about it.

In the last issue of *High Country Hoots*, the Board announced the availability of a scholarship to help a young birder attend one of the three Carolina Bird Club meetings held each year in North or South Carolina. These meetings gather birders from throughout the region for two days of field trips, speakers and birding camaraderie.

We received applications from three Appalachian State University students to attend the CBC Spring meeting that will be held in Blowing Rock in April. Rather than limit our selection to just one student as originally planned, the Board decided to expand the scholarship to include all three young birders. Our three scholarship winners are José Garrido, Elizabeth White and Karin Perk.

For each student, HCAS will pay for membership in HCAS and CBC, for the meeting registration and evening banquet, and will provide some funds for gas to get to and from the meeting.

We're excited to be able to help three fledgling birders become part of HCAS and CBC. If you are able to attend the Spring CBC meeting, be sure to welcome our scholarship recipients to the birding community.

Bob



Mickey Shortt
with his children
birding at New
River Gorge
National River,
photo by Mary
Ann Shortt

February-March-April 2016

Volume 7 Issue 1

Brookshire Park Nature Walk

by Guy McGrane

The first Saturday of each month, from 8 to 10 a.m., we will be doing our regular Brookshire Park Nature Walk. We will start at the parking area near the picnic shelter and walk down the greenway, looping around the sparrow fields on the way back, for a total distance of about a mile.

In February we'll likely see a lot of our winter regulars, like Belted Kingfisher, Killdeer, and White-throated Sparrow. In March we could get some early migrants like gulls and possibly shorebirds, and in April we could see just about any bird as well as our flora returning to life--who knows, perhaps we'll see an American Bittern if we're very lucky. We will have spare pairs of binoculars available for beginners or returners who've lost theirs.

Email me at badgerboy@wilkes.net for more info.

Directions: From downtown Boone, travel east on highway 421. Turn left on Brookshire Rd. at the "Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex" sign just before the Marathon gas station at Bamboo Rd. on the right. If you want to Google directions, the address is 250 Brookshire Road, Boone. The link to the Google map is <http://tinyurl.com/j4u7waf>



Bobolink, non-breeding plumage. Photo by Guy McGrane

In the News: Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

Article & photos by Richard Gray



Wilson's Warbler, taken at the NWR headquarters

The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge has been in the news lately because of its take-over by a group of western ranchers who see its existence as an example of the overreach of the Federal Government.

Malheur NWR was one of the first National Wildlife Refuges created in the United States. It was established in 1908 by President Teddy Roosevelt "as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds" in response to the decimation of egret populations by plumage hunters.

Malheur refuge now encompasses 187,757 acres, including Malheur and Harney lakes to the north and the Blitzen River valley to the south.

The extensive wetlands and open waters of the refuge are a magnet to birds in the otherwise arid intermountain west. It lies strategically on the Pacific flyway, and thus is of international ecological importance as a stopping-off point for

Wilson's Snipe, taken at Blitzen Valley

migrating birds. With over 320 recorded bird species, Malheur refuge is one of the prime birding sites in North America and was one of Roger Tory Peterson's top 10 U.S. birding destinations.

We can only hope that the current take-over of the refuge will be settled peacefully with no damage to the birds or their habitat.



Clark's Grebe, taken at Malheur Lake

To read about the Malheur NWR, you can go the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's website <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/malheur> and the Audubon Society of Portland's web page on the refuge <http://tinyurl.com/j73gb3q>

The Audubon Society of Portland's statement on the occupation can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/jq3clr9>

You can also check out this link to the New York Times article, [Angry Birders: Standoff at Oregon Refuge Has Riled a Passionate Group](#)

It's Time to Count Your Birds

by Bob Cherry

Great Backyard Bird Count 2016

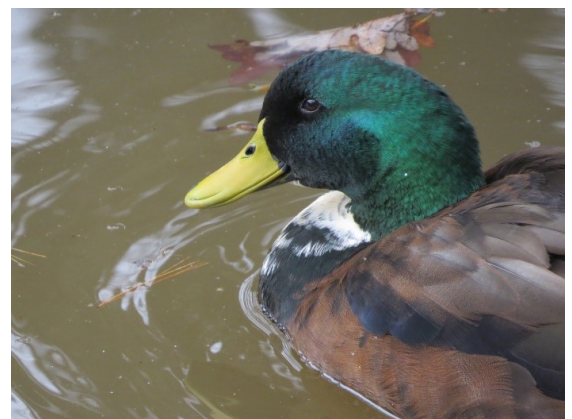
Once again this February the birding world will be participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This year's count will be held **Friday, February 12 through Monday, February, 15** and, despite what the name might imply, you can count birds anywhere you happen to be.

Begun by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and National Audubon Society in 1998, GBBC has expanded to more than 100 countries. In 2015, birders submitted 147,256 checklists to eBird with a record 5,090 species listed, nearly half of the known species in the world.

The United States led the list of checklists submitted with 108,396 containing 671 species followed by Canadian birders who turned in 10,491 lists with 241 species. Even though Ecuador submitted just 138 lists, these contained 784 species making Ecuador number one for the year for most species observed.

The ten most frequently reported species were all North American birds, presumably since this is where most checklists came from. Northern Cardinals and Dark-eyed Juncos were on half of North American lists, followed by Mourning Doves, Downy Woodpeckers and Blue Jays to make up the top five. The top five species reported for abundance were Snow Geese (1,494,937 birds) followed by Canada Geese, Bramblings, European Starlings and Mallard Ducks.

If you'd like to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count this year, you can find information and register at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/> As stated earlier, you aren't limited to reporting birds just from your yard, although that is certainly allowed. Several HCAS birders will be out that day, so if you want some company, just post a note on the HCAS Yahoo group email and make an event of it.



Mallard Duck at Powder Horn Mountain
Photo by Beverly Saltonstall

Helping Birds by Going Native

Article by Bob Cherry

Photos by Curtis Smalling

Native plants and native birds. It's a natural combination and now HCAS is working to make it more of a reality here in the High Country with two new programs.

Members of HCAS and the Blue Ridge Chapter of the North Carolina Native Plant Society will be joining forces to encourage the availability and use of native plants for High Country landowners. With help from Kim Brand of the Audubon North Carolina Bird-Friendly Communities program, we will be talking with local nurseries to ensure that they have native plants for customers to buy and identifying those plants so people will more easily know what to buy. These native plants are important to our native birds for foraging, nesting and roosting, and we hope that by identifying them more people will buy native plants and plant them around their homes.

HCAS has also received a grant for \$500 from Audubon North Carolina to help our birds here in the High Country. The grants were available for a wide range of uses, with the limitation only that projects would in some way help birds cope with future climate change and the effects that will come with these changes.

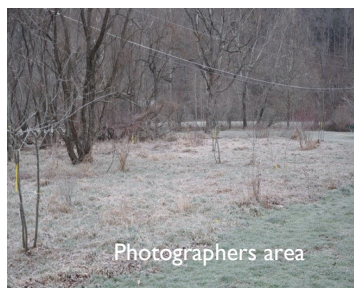


HCAS area

HCAS requested the funds to help Valle Crucis Community Park, one of our great local birding sites, with their ongoing work to landscape the park. They have been busy repairing

stream banks, removing non-native plants (with HCAS help) and planting native trees and shrubs. We requested the \$500 grant to purchase native plants for use behind the new visitor center to establish vegetation that would be attractive to birds and birders alike. This vegetation will replace the buffer of weeds and stuff that was there prior to construction.

In addition, several years ago, HCAS (through the efforts and donations of three of our excellent HCAS photographers) provided \$1,050 to Valle Crucis Community Park to use in their pond restoration project. The photographers wanted to create an area at the south end of the pond where birds would love to come and photographers would have a great place to photograph the birds. Curtis Smalling reported that this area has now been planted with five larger diameter service-



Photographers area

berry trees and, in the late winter, additional live stakes will be planted.

Although not related to HCAS projects at VCCP, Curtis provided a photo of the buffer planting of oaks and rhododendrons between the new building and the fence, heading upstream toward the two houses across the field.



Buffer area

This buffer will remain largely unmowed between the trees and the fence, creating a nice island of habitat there. He also noted that large diameter trees have been planted down at the creek at the end of the parking lot where the stream bank restoration occurred this past year.

We're hoping that these projects will help our local birds as we provide nesting, foraging and roosting sites by making native plants more available. This in turn will make it easier for High Country birders to find the birds that we all enjoy so much.

Wings & Wine

Friday, April 8, 2016

By Brenda Combs

Want to have a delightful day combining birding with sampling wine? Then join us, rain or shine, on Friday, April 8 for *Wings & Wine*. Last year, under the name *Birds & Beverages*, eight HCAS birders enjoyed sampling wine at Shadow Springs, Raffaldini, and MenaRick vineyards and counting 31 species of birds. This year we've changed the name, but it will be the same fun event!



We will meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot in front of Lowes Foods off Hwy. 421 in Wilkesboro. (Click link for map [1834 Winkler St. Wilkesboro, NC.](#)) We will bird along the way to Shiloh General Store which is located at 5520 Saint Paul Church Rd. in Hamptonville. Shiloh General Store prepares fresh sandwiches in its deli. They have a selection of meats, chicken salad, and homemade breads. You can either purchase your lunch there or bring a picnic.

We will take time to explore the store and to bird this area. Then we will be off to Laurel Gray Winery to picnic, taste wine (optional) and bird before heading to our second winery, Dobbins Creek. We anticipate that we will finish between 2 and 3 p.m.

Sharp-shinned Hawk #2015-1516

Article and photos by Dr. Amber McNamara

We are happy to bring you another story of a successful rehabilitation from Dr. Amber McNamara, Veterinarian, May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (MWRC), and Assistant Professor of Biology at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk. We hope to continue bringing you these stories which highlight the excellent work the clinic does to help our avian friends. Late last year, HCAS made a donation to Friends of Wildlife at Lees-McRae to support the work of the MWRC.



On December 17, the MWRC received an injured Sharp-shinned Hawk, the 1,516th patient admitted in 2015. He had a noticeable right wing droop, with the primary feathers nearly

touching the floor of his cage.

This photo (above) shows Dr. McNamara restraining the Sharpie, just before she weighed him. He has a leather hood on his head with an opening for his beak. The hood is a tiny bit too big...it is the smallest one she had, but his head is so very tiny. The hood is snugged up in back via the straps. Dr. McNamara often uses hoods on raptors during examinations, weight checks, acupuncture sessions, etc. With their eyes covered, their stress level is significantly reduced - good for them and us.

After pain medications were administered, thorough palpation revealed that the tiny hawk had swelling in his elbow, but no indication of a fracture – good news. With MWRC Director Nina Fischesser restraining the hawk, Dr. Amber McNamara placed a light but secure wrap to stabilize the wing.

Initially weighing in at a whopping 82 grams (less than the weight of a banana), the Sharp-shinned hawk became increasingly feisty over the next 48 hours. At that time, his wrap was removed, and the swelling had diminished by approximately 50%. He was eating well, so the decision was made to leave the wrap off, continue cage rest, and place pain medications in his food, thereby minimizing both handling and patient stress.

By December 28, this escape artist was feeling well enough to attempt a getaway each time his cage door was opened. The time for cage rest was over, and the

“Sharpie” was moved to an 8’ x 8’ outdoor enclosure. Although this would not yet give him the opportunity for sustained flight, it would allow him to perform his own physical therapy and prevent the possibility of stiffness forming in the healing elbow.



On January 15, the Sharpie was promoted to the MWRC's 30-foot flight enclosure. With his wings held in perfect symmetry, he zipped back and forth in this new space. Since Sharp-shinned Hawks are such incredibly adept and agile fliers, MWRC staff will carefully monitor his maneuverability and stamina before giving the green light for release. He was found in Candler, North Carolina and – with the finder's help - will be returned there to his home territory.

Like a number of patients, this hawk was originally admitted to the Western North Carolina Nature Center in Asheville and did not arrive at the MWRC until 2 days after his initial injury. Although the Nature Center regularly receives wildlife patients, securing transport of those patients to the MWRC in Banner Elk can be challenging. If you would be interested in serving as a volunteer transporter for the MWRC, please contact Nina Fischesser or Dr. McNamara at 828-898-2568.

To see the year-end clinic review, click on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/hu5fmxs>

For more information about the MWRC, please visit us here: <http://tinyurl.com/jnx4usd>



Spring Break at Charleston, SC

March 6 – 9

by Martha Cutler

We are in the planning stage for the HCAS spring break trip to South Carolina. This year we decided to bird in the Charleston area. We are thinking of leaving Boone on Sunday, March 6. Monday birding options might include the Pitt Street Causeway and Cape Romain. On Tuesday we would take the ferry to Bulls Island (cost, \$40/adult) and spend the day there.

[Link to Ferry](#)

We would return to Boone on Wednesday, March 9. This is a tentative schedule, and we would not have to do everything as a group.

We would like to know who might be interested in going along. This won't commit you, so just email contactus@highcountryaudubon.org with "SC Trip 2016" in the subject line if you are considering joining us.

A Dazzling Display of Woodcocks

by Bob Cherry



The Blue Ridge Parkway is seeking help with surveys of American Woodcock along the Parkway in the Blowing Rock area. These birds mate during late winter and early spring and the male puts on an entertaining display flight as part of the mating ritual. If you haven't seen one, you can view a video at <http://tinyurl.com/hgovpdd>

Volunteers will be asked to adopt one of the fields where woodcocks have displayed in the past and visit these sites each week, although even less frequent visits would be helpful. The surveys start shortly after sunset, or, if you're a morning person, they also start before sunrise, and last about half an hour. Surveyors will record such things as how many birds are displaying and when they begin and end their flights.

If you're interested in helping with this citizen science project please email Bob_Cherry@nps.gov

Come Bird @ My HotSpot

by Martha Cutler

Come Bird @ My HotSpot is back with bird walks at local hot spots. Mark your calendars now! The bird walks start in March in Wilkesboro and move on to higher elevations through April, ending back again at a lower elevation at Marley's Ford in Wilkes County at the end of April. In May (see "Save the Date" on page 9 in this newsletter), we'll again head to a higher elevation in Todd. If you have suggestions for other birding hot spots that might be added to the schedule, please get in touch with Martha Cutler at contactus@highcountryaudubon.org.

Keep an eye on the Yahoo group email and the HCAS calendar for updates on details and directions and for additional "pop-up" bird walks.

1. Wilkes County (Brenda and Monty Combs)

We'll meet at the W. Kerr Scott Visitor Center (elevation ~ 1100 feet) at 8:00 a.m. on **Saturday, March 19** and bird around the reservoir until about 11:00 a.m. If we're unable to go due to bad weather, the rain date will be the following Wednesday, March 23.

2. Powder Horn Mountain (Janet and Richard Paulette)

This year we're again scheduling two dates for birding at Powder Horn Mountain on the Blue Ridge escarpment: **Tuesday, April 19**, (rain date Thursday, April 21) and **Saturday, April 23**. We'll meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot near the clubhouse at Powder Horn Mountain then drive to the Paulettes' house (elev. ~2000 feet). There'll be coffee and sweet bread/muffins there for you while birding from the deck. Then we'll walk a 2 ½ mile loop along the roads (which include some fairly steep hills) and two small lakes. We should finish by about 11:00 a.m.

3. Marley's Ford, W. Kerr Scott Reservoir (Guy McGrane)

At 8 a.m. on Saturday, April 30, meet at Marley's Ford at the upper end of the W. Kerr Scott Reservoir in Wilkes

County. There is easy walking around an impoundment and along a river trail, which can be a little muddy at times. Birders can walk up to about a mile or as little as a couple hundred yards. We'll finish about 11 a.m.



Pine Warbler photo by Doris Ratchford

Better Birder's Books

by Sheryl McNair

When it comes to birds, often a picture is worth a thousand words. But, sometimes, if you are obtuse, as I sometimes am, you need the words to hit you over the head. *Identify Yourself, The 50 Most Common Birding Identification Challenges* by Bill Thompson III and the editors of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, with illustrations by Julie Zickefoose, does that for me. Yes, it does require reading the words and not just looking at the pretty pictures. When one does that, many difficult bird identifications become relatively easy.

Last October, I re-read the sparrow section in preparation for a trip to Valle Crucis. Lo and behold, I stumbled on a Lincoln's Sparrow, and the words from *Identify Yourself* popped into my head, "a buffy malar stripe (the "mustache"), a buffy eye-ring, and an obvious gray supercilium." What I was about to pass over suddenly stood out clearly.



Lincoln's Sparrow by Don Mullaney

I did not have quite the same experience looking at House and Purple Finches—no Purple Finch appeared before me, but the book illuminated the difference to me in a way I hadn't perceived before—the adult male House Finch has streaky flanks, and the adult male Purple Finch does not. (Many other differences are mentioned, but that's the one that made it for me).

Maybe the illumination comes because the prose is obviously there to be read, and there's a lot of it—one can't gloss over it and just go for the pictures. The end result is that this book contains a lot of basic information that helps eliminate confusion between similar species of birds. I have not read and studied the whole book—if I did, I'm sure I'd be an expert birder. But each time I review various sections, I am rewarded with new insights, and some better birding identifications.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology recently came out with 3 waterfowl Id guides, by Kevin J. McGowan, called *Where's the White?* The premise is fairly simple—waterfowl are often at a distance, but, generally, you're likely to see the whole bird (unlike watching warblers in the trees). Knowing the patterns of white that are visible can enable you to distin-

guish even distant birds. These are 3 compact, laminated, foldout guides that are easy to carry around. Number 1 provides an overview of the basics, number 2 covers Dabbling and Diving Ducks, and number 3 covers Sea Ducks and Others. Anyone planning a trip to the coast, or wanting to study up on waterfowl, could benefit from these guides. And, despite the emphasis on white, they do include color illustrations. I wish, though, that these guides included birds in flight. These guides are available for \$7.95, each (free shipping).

The Warbler Guide, by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle, is a whopping 556 pages—covering all North American warblers. Pages 138-511 cover each individual warbler species, including similar species, pictures of specimens from the Smithsonian (to illustrate color variations), general migration times, songs, and, my personal favorite, the diagnostic traits. These are traits which, if present, eliminate all other possible species. For example, if one sees a white "handkerchief" at the base of primaries, it is a Black-throated Blue Warbler. See above photo by Doris Ratchford.



In most cases these diagnostic traits are presented pictorially, but they are also described in verbiage. The first 137 pages describe how to use the guide and include sections that allow one to "neck down" to the possible species. Along this line, there are 2 pages of warbler faces; 2 pages of warbler side views; 2 pages of 45-degree angle views; 2 pages of underviews; 2 pages of east spring warblers; 2 pages of east fall warblers; two pages each of spring and fall for western birds; and the eastern undertail views and western undertail views, with check marks to denote diagnostic features.

On top of all this, there are song guides—if you can determine whether you are listening to a trilled, steady pitch, it narrows the "suspects" to Pine, Worm-eating, Blackpoll, Orange-crowned and Palm warblers, in the East. The book provides sonograms of the different songs of different species. The authors recognize that warblers frequently don't hang around to be fully seen, and they attempt to provide different ways to identify each species. There is even a quiz section in the back, so you can learn to follow their detection methods. My only frustration with this book is that there aren't similar ones for other birds—I keep trying to use it for non-warblers, and it just isn't that helpful for most non-warblers, although birds that could be mistaken for particular warblers are included as comparison species. In my opinion, this book is well worth the price (from \$18-\$30, online).

May 2016: Watch Out for Warblers!

by Martha Cutler

Since over 2 dozen species of warblers breed in the High Country, HCAS has decided to make a concerted effort this spring to see as many of them as possible, plus whatever migrant species we might spot on their way through our area. Be sure to take note of the field trips under “Save the Date” on page 9 in this newsletter.

In addition, during May we will schedule some extra local field trips to places where we are likely to spot birds (down the escarpment to Roseboro, Edgemont etc. for Swainson’s, Worm-eating and Yellow-throated, for example).

We will provide checklists of species to those who want one. This is still in the planning stages, so check the Yahoo group email and the website for updates. Anyone who has a good warbler site to suggest – and is willing to lead a field trip! – is encouraged to contact Martha Cutler or email to contactus@highcountryaudubon.org



Yellow-breasted Chat, (above), and Canada Warbler (right) photos by Richard Gray.



Outer Banks “Chase Trip”

In early December 2015, Mickey Shortt, Jesse Pope, and Bob Cherry headed to the Outer Banks to see as many species of birds as possible in the short time they

had. This photo of two Sandhill Cranes among Tundra Swans is just to whet your appetite for the Tuesday, May 17, HCAS meeting when Mickey Shortt will tell us about the chase.



Photo by Mickey Shortt, Dec. 5, 2015.

Birding the Space Coast

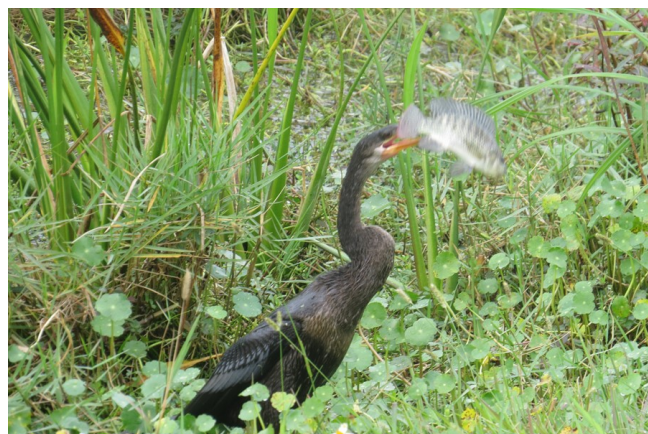
Article and photos by Martha Cutler



Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)

I recently joined Janet Palmer for a couple days birding the east coast of Florida south of Titusville. Information from the Florida Birding Trail and the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival helped us to identify birding sites. We spent a full day exploring the Merritt Island Wildlife Reserve and enjoying the wonderful seven-mile [Black Point Drive](#). On the reserve’s Scrub Ridge Trail we got excellent looks at a Florida Scrub-Jay, a life bird for both of us.

The Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands, also known as the [Viera Wetlands](#) were such a great birding spot that we went back a second time. Due to heavy rainfall, the roads along the dikes around the impoundments were closed so we had to bird on foot. Among the species we spotted were a pair of Limpkins and an American Bittern. We also observed Great Blue Herons and Anhingas engaged in courting behaviors and enjoyed watching an Anhinga juggle and finally swallow what seemed to be a rather large fish for such a thin neck.



Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

A non-birding highlight was paddling in the Turkey Creek Sanctuary in Palm Bay – with Manatees! I could have touched the one that came up to check out my kayak. All in all, a great escape from Boone winter weather with wonderful birds and wildlife thrown in.



The Florida Scrub-Jay (FSLJ), endemic only to Florida, is an ancient bird. Millions of years ago, when Florida was mostly underwater, the Scrub-Jays lived on the sandy soils of the few remaining islands, developing adaptive skills making survival in this harsh environment possible. This scrub habitat is the most endangered habitat in Florida, but ideal habitat for the Scrub-Jays. This high, dry land is also highly desirable for development.

Over the last 100 years, Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) numbers have declined by 80–90%, and there are only an estimated 3,000–4,000 family groups remaining. As a result, the Florida Scrub-Jay is listed by the federal government as a threatened species.

Back in the late 1960's, Glen Woolfenden, PhD, a professor of Zoology at the University of South Florida, noticed 3 Florida Scrub-Jays on a wire. During breeding season this is very unusual behavior and it sparked his interest. As a result of his interest and his dogged research, the Florida Scrub-Jay is the most studied species of any bird in the world.

Scrub-Jays are quite interesting birds. To start with they are cooperative breeders. Young from the previous year stay with the family group to help raise the next generation, a rare occurrence in birds. They are very territorial and stay in family groups of from 2-4 Scrub-Jays, and they are long-lived, living upwards of 16 years.

The most striking characteristic of the Florida Scrub-Jay is their friendly nature. It is not unusual to have one land on your head or out-stretched hand. Yet they are known by researchers as the “terror of the scrub”, due to their voracious appetite for insects.

In the summer months, their diet consists nearly exclusively of insects. This is also the time they breed. From the time an egg is laid, it only takes 18 days for the chick to be full grown. Protein from insects is critical to raise healthy chicks.

The Florida Scrub-Jay

“The Terror of the Scrub”

Article and photo by Beverly Saltonstall

During the non-breeding winter, their diet consists mostly of acorns. Studies show that they can gather up to 7000 acorns in a season and cache them in the sandy soil, remnants of the ancient sandy beaches.

Two critical components necessary for the survival of these birds are fires and the sandy soil needed to hide the acorns. Loss of habitat is often due to the lack of fires necessary to keep the vegetation low. Scrub-Jays do not like forest-like habitat because that is Blue Jays habitat and Blue Jays are a chief competitor.

The Archibald Biological Center in central Florida, has been conducting continuous research on the Scrub-Jays since the 1960's. They

have several different habitats, from suburban areas to natural scrub habitat, where they can study the Scrub-Jays from birth to death. Every bird is banded, and counted each year. Their friendly nature allows the researchers to teach the birds to respond to a whistle, and they come out and are easily counted.



Thanks to these studies, the researchers have a pedigree for these birds that goes back 12 generations, which no other bird in the world has. This enables the researchers to determine if a trait is genetic or environmental. Not many humans know who their great-great-great-great grandmother was!

Feeding the Scrub-Jays is highly discouraged as well as illegal. Studies show that if food is plentiful, the Scrub-Jays have a false sense of security thinking they have an unlimited food supply. In response to this they reduce the size of their territory and have more young. If that food source is reduced or taken away, less natural food is available and the adults and newborns will starve.

If you are planning a visit to Florida, the Florida Scrub-Jay is a must-see bird. A visit to the Archibald Biological Center, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge or Oscar Scherer State Park is also a must.

Selfie by Janet Palmer in
Cape Coral, FL. January 2016

Save the Date

May 1 Sun.	Golden-winged Warbler Field Day Shady Grove Gardens Ashe County	
May 7 Sat.	Brookshire Park Nature Walk	8 a.m. – 10 a.m.
May 10 Tues.	Come Bird @ My HotSpot Martha Cutler & Doug Blackford Todd, NC Rain date: Thurs. May 12	8 a.m.
May 13 Fri.	Spring Bird Count Grandfather Mountain	
May 13-15 Fri.-Sun.	Audubon North Carolina 2016 Annual Meeting Winston-Salem, NC	
May 14 Sat.	Come Bird @ My HotSpot Martha Cutler & Doug Blackford, Todd, NC	8 a.m.

Volunteer Wanted: HCAS Board Secretary

Can you listen and take notes at the same time? Then HCAS needs you. Please consider whether this might be your way to get involved and contribute to the success of HCAS. Contact Bob Cherry at bcherry001@gmail.com.

Northern Saw-whet Owl



Since the formation of High Country Audubon Society, its logo has been the cute, little Northern Saw-whet Owl. In late 2015, the American Bird Conservancy honored “our” bird as its Bird of the Week.

Check out this link for more information on our owl, and, if you've never heard its song, listen to the short audio of its repeated “tooting” whistle. Listen [\[HERE\]](#)

Birding without Borders



Noah Strycker describes himself as a “writer, photographer, adventurer, and general bird man”. In 2015, he set off to travel around the world for a Big Year. After 41 countries on all seven continents, he finished his Big Year with a group of Silver-breasted Broadbills just

before sunset on December 31, 2015. He ended the year with an amazing 6,042 species of birds! For more, check out his daily blog of the trip at <https://www.audubon.org/authors/noah-strycker>

We Appreciate Our Sponsors!



Through our Lens: Part I



Cackling Goose, Dwayne Martin, Jan. 2016



Tufted Titmouse
Martha Cutler, Feb. 2015



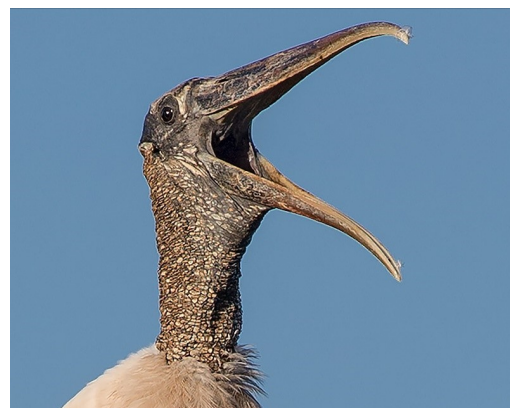
Bald Eagle, Kerr Scott
Monty Combs, Jan. 2016



Purple Gallinule, Wakodahatchee
Wetlands, Del Ray Beach, Florida.
Don Mullaney, Dec. 2015



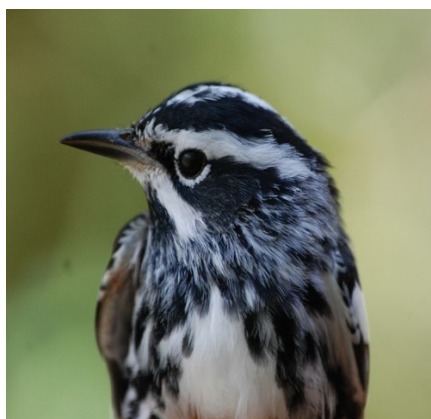
Cormorant Family, Dominican Republic
Don Mullaney, Dec. 2015



Woodstork, Green Cay Wetlands
Boynton Beach, FL,
Don Mullaney, Nov. 2015



Chestnut-sided Warbler



Black-and-white Warbler



Yellow-throated Warbler

Photos by Doris Ratchford

Photo by Richard Gray

Through Our Lens: Part II



Kim Barley's Eastern Meadowlark (left),
Adams Ranch, Fort Pierce, FL, Nov. 2015
Tree Swallow, Valle Crucis Community Park.

Yellow-headed Blackbird, Malheur NWR
Richard Gray, May 2013



Silver-throated Tanager

Blue-winged Mountain Tanager

Photos taken by Wes McNair, Ecuador, Dec. 2015

Sleeping juvenile Burrowing Owl, Cape
Coral, FL, Beverly Saltonstall, Jan 2016

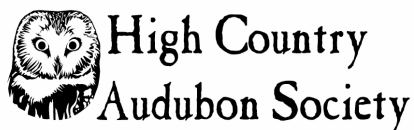


Greater Yellowlegs, Kerr Scott,
Nov. 2015

Horned Lark, Greenhorn Rd., Wilkes
Co. during Stone Mountain CBC.

Banded Reddish Egret with telemetry wire
for tracking, Ding Darling NWR,
Beverly Saltonstall, Jan, 2016

Photos by Guy McGrane.



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High Country Hoots is published four times a year by the High Country Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Group email members receive the newsletter via electronic mail. There is also access to the newsletter on our website, and it is archived at

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A \$5 donation is suggested for
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please check HCAS Yahoo group email regularly for changes/additions to the calendar.

First of the Year HCAS Meeting: Tues. March, 15, 2016

February		
5-6 Fri. - Sat.	Carolina Bird Club Winter Meeting Litchfield Beach, SC	
6 Sat.	Field trip: Burke's Garden, VA Trip leader: Jesse Pope Rain date: Sat. Feb. 20	7:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.
6 Sat.	Brookshire Park Nature Walk Trip leader: Guy McGrane Meet at parking area near the picnic shelter	8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
12-15 Fri. - Mon.	Great Backyard Bird Count Where: wherever you want to do it! Who: everyone, hopefully! How: http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc	

March		
5 Sat.	Brookshire Park Nature Walk Trip leader: Guy McGrane Meet at parking area near the picnic shelter	8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
6-9 Sun. - Wed.	Spring Break trip to Charleston, SC See details on Yahoo group email when plans are finalized.	
15 Tues.	First of the Year HCAS monthly meeting Holiday Inn Express, Boone Program: TBA	6:30 p.m.
19 Sat.	Come Bird @ My HotSpot Wilkes County Trip leaders: Monty & Brenda Combs Meet at W. Kerr Scott Visitor Center Rain date: Wed. March 23	8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

April		
2 Sat.	Brookshire Park Nature Walk Trip leader: Guy McGrane Meet at parking area near the picnic shelter	8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
6 Wed. (tentative)	First of the year weekly bird walk Valle Crucis Community Park Leader: Curtis Smalling Watauga Birding Hotline 828-265-0198	8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
8 Fri.	Wings & Wine Trip Leaders: Brenda and Monty Combs Meet at Lowe's Food, Wilkesboro	9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
TBA Mid-April	Garlic Mustard Removal Meat Camp Creek Environmental Studies Area and Valle Crucis Community Park	
19 Tues.	Come Bird @ My HotSpot Powder Horn Mountain Trip leaders: Janet & Richard Paulette Rain date: Thurs, Apr. 21	8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
19 Tues.	HCAS monthly meeting Holiday Inn Express, Boone Program: TBA	6:30 p.m.
23 Sat.	Come Bird @ My HotSpot Powder Horn Mountain Trip leaders: Janet & Richard Paulette	8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
28-30 Thur.- Sat.	Carolina Bird Club Spring Meeting Blowing Rock, NC	
30 Sun.	Come Bird @ My HotSpot Marley's Ford, W. Kerr Scott Reservoir Trip leader: Guy McGrane	8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.