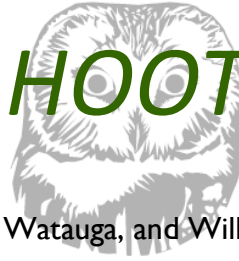


# HIGH COUNTRY HOOTS



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

Feb-Mar-Apr 2017

Volume 9 Issue 1



*Birding at Hiwassee*

**Sandhill Cranes**  
Article and Photo:  
Al Hooks

Following in the tradition of previous HCAS field trips, six HCAS members and two guests visited southeastern Tennessee January 20 and 21. Our primary goal was to visit Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge to see wintering Sandhill Cranes. Facing near decimation, the Eastern Sandhill subspecies population has rebounded to current estimates of 75,000. Hiwassee hosts the second largest wintering population of Sandhill Cranes in the world.

The cold spell earlier in January thinned the Sandhills ranks as they sought warmer weather further south. Nonetheless, our group was delighted at the sheer numbers of Sandhills we saw in two separate locations. A rough estimate of 2,000 Sandhills were gathered in the shallow backwaters of the Hiwassee River as it meets the Tennessee River near Dayton, TN. The cacophony of several thousand cranes in close proximity provided an auditory delight.

The highlight of the trip was easily a female Whooping Crane at Hiwassee. She was quite easy to spot despite the large number of Sandhills. Her snowy white plumage contrasted nicely to the light gray coloration of the Sandhills, especially in the dimmer conditions near dusk and dawn. To our excitement, she made a slow march from the opposite bank to the near bank in front of us. We marveled at her close proximity knowing we may never again be so close to this rare species. The Whooping Crane was a lifebird for substantially all of us.

Other waterbirds thrive at Hiwassee and the nearby Cherokee Removal Memorial Park. Among the more notable species were four Snow Geese and over 40 American White Pelicans. Members also saw Canvasbacks, Gadwalls, Mallards, Great Blue Herons, American Wigeons, Redheads, Ruddy Ducks and a solitary Northern Pintail, Great Egret and Red-breasted Merganser.



Photo: Debbie Shetterly

Another highlight for several of us was an early morning flyover by an immature Bald Eagle. We spotted this Bald Eagle in a distant tree the previous afternoon from the Hiwassee viewing platform. We questioned the raptor identification due to the distance. Our close encounter the following morning confirmed our Bald Eagle identification.

Our Hiwassee stop was sandwiched by stops at two other locations. Our first stop of the trip was Yuchi Wildlife Management Area, approximately 10 miles north of Dayton. Notable species at Yuchi included 700 Sandhill Cranes, two Red-headed Woodpeckers, an American Kestrel, two White-crowned Sparrows and a flock of 500 Red-winged Blackbirds.

Our last stop was Seven Islands State Birding Park, east of Knoxville. Much to our disappointment, birding here was cut short due to moderate rain entering the area. Nonetheless, we did manage to eke out some good finds, including a Barred Owl, an American Kestrel, and a Hermit Thrush, among others. Seven Islands has great sparrow habitat and also houses numerous barns, allowing for the opportunity to see several owl species.

Hiwassee and the other locales exceeded our expectations. Seeing one of North America's rarest birds makes for a memorable trip none of us will soon forget!

## Birding Burke's Garden, Virginia

Saturday, February 11, 2017



Burke's Garden, Virginia's highest valley at 3,000 feet, is a bowl-shaped valley carved out of the top of a mountain. It offers beautiful scenery and can be a lot of fun to visit in the winter. Good birds seen there on a regular basis include raptors like Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Kestrel. Winter waterfowl often includes American Black Duck, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, and Northern Pintail. In past trips, HCAS birders have seen Horned Lark, Rusty Blackbird, and Red-headed Woodpecker.

Meeting time and place will depend on who is going. Although Burke's Garden is only about 80 miles due north of Boone, it takes almost 3 hours to get there. Once we get to Burke's Garden, we will drive the loop around the valley, birding from the car most of the day. The birds and weather conditions usually dictate how much time we spend where in the valley.

The Burke's Garden General Store will be open (it's only open on Saturdays in the winter). You can purchase food there for lunch or you can bring your own lunch, as well as any snacks you might want during the day. Other than the General Store, there are no other places with food or restrooms, except (with luck) the old outhouse at one of the churches. We will make stops on the drive to Burke's Garden and will make one last stop at a restroom just outside the valley. Total time between rest stops will be 3-4 hours.

For this trip be prepared for any weather. The colder and harsher the weather, the better for the birds up there! So, don't let the cold weather forecast discourage you!! Overall, it's a great trip and a great tradition for High Country Audubon.

**If you are interested in participating in this trip, please contact trip leader Guy McGrane via e-mail: [badgerboy@wilkes.net](mailto:badgerboy@wilkes.net), or call 336/981-5480.**

Photo: [website](#) of Visit Tazewell County, VA, where you can read the history and folklore of "God's Thumbprint".

## Countdown to Counting Your Birds!

### Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

Friday, Feb. 17 – Monday, Feb. 20

In February, birders all across the world will be participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This year's count will be held **Friday, February 17 through Monday, February 20** 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, the 2016 GBBC had expanded to more than 130 countries. In 2016, **birders submitted 162,052 checklists** to eBird with a record 5,689 species listed, more than half the known bird species in the world and 599 more species than 2015! Check out the excellent information in the summary of the 2016 GBBC: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/2016-gbbc-summary/>



If you'd like to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count this year, you can find information at: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

**Dark-eyed Junco (L)**

Photo: Judi Sawyer

Here are a few highlights

- The **Dark-eyed Junco** was at the top of the list of *Top 10 most frequently reported species*, and was submitted on 63,110 lists followed by the **Northern Cardinal** which was submitted on 62,323 lists
- **North Carolina** was 7<sup>th</sup> on the *Top 10 states by checklists submitted* with 212 species. California was at the top with 365 species reported.
- **India** had the most species reported at 784 although India is third in number of checklists submitted, 7,796 (up from 467 in 2013!!) Compare that with the United States which had the most lists submitted at 131,290 and was 4<sup>th</sup> on number of species with 665.



**Northern Cardinal**

Photo: Doris Ratchford



## Not-Quite-Spring Birding: South to Savannah

by Martha Cutler



We thought it might be interesting to head a bit further south for this year's HCAS Spring Break birding trip and are considering birding in the Savannah area, visiting places like Tybee Island, Fort Pulaski and possibly further south to Harris Neck NWR.

The window for this trip is March 11 to March 19, the week of ASU Spring Break. Since it takes at least five-and-a-half hours to get to Savannah from Boone, we might want to plan on staying three nights rather than two as in the past.

At this point, please let me know if you are interested in going and whether you have any preferences or needs regarding the actual dates (within the week of break). Right now it doesn't seem as though we need a break from winter weather, but that could change! Please share this with anyone you know who might be interested in the trip.

Email Martha at [contactus@highcountryaudubon.org](mailto:contactus@highcountryaudubon.org) with "Savannah" as the subject.



### Barred Owl

Photo: Judi Sawyer

Jessie Pope, Mickey Shortt and Judi Sawyer were ending up their Christmas Bird Count on Grandfather Mountain, and this was the last bird they counted.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays Return !!

### Breeding Bird Survey

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

You've probably seen emails on the HCAS group email seeking volunteers to help with the Breeding Bird Survey, but you might not really know what it is, why it is, or how it works. Our presenter **Merrill Lynch** will answer these questions for you in the first program of our 2017 season on Tuesday, March 21 at 6:30 pm at the Holiday Inn Express in Boone.

Merrill Lynch spent his career in the field of conservation biology. First as a biologist with the NC Natural Heritage Program (1978-1982), then as Regional Ecologist for the Southeastern Regional Office of The Nature Conservancy (1983-1989), followed by Assistant Director of Protection for the NC Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (1989-2012). From 2012 to the present, he has been self-employed as a contract biologist working for many government agencies and nonprofit conservation organiza-



tions. Merrill is a lifelong birder: 4,000+ species recorded on all continents except Antarctica.

The Breeding Bird Survey is the only continent-wide, citizen science-based, assessment of breeding bird populations in North America. Merrill Lynch has been doing breeding bird surveys in North Carolina every year since 1972. His presentation will be about the survey, some of the trends in breeding bird populations it has revealed, and his experience over the years running it.

According to the website of the US Geological Survey Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (<https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/about/>) which, together with the Canadian Wildlife Service National Wildlife Research Center, oversees the North American Breeding Bird Survey, "The BBS is a long-term, large-scale, international avian monitoring program initiated in 1966 to track the status and trends of North American bird populations."

It sounds large and impressive, but a lot of the basic data collection is done by regular folks, including some HCAS members. Maybe you could be one of them in the future!

HCAS offers programs on the third Tuesday of each month, March through October, at 6:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Express, Boone. All HCAS programs and activities are open to the public.



## HCAS Plantings at Valle Crucis Community Park

Article by Richard Gray. Photos: Janet Palmer

High Country Audubon's bird-friendly garden at Valle Crucis Community Park was expanded this fall with the addition of a number of new native plants including Ninebark, New Jersey tea, Sweet Azalea, Virginia Sweetspire, Winterberry, Beautyberry, and Spicebush. These plants were selected to provide winter food and shelter for our native birds and were installed immediately behind the new VCCP Welcome and Environmental Education Center.



The purpose of this garden is two-fold. First, by planting more native plants in our parks and gardens, we can help to improve the resiliency of

our native birds as they face the dual threats of habitat loss and climate change. Second, this garden will, hopefully, inspire visitors to the park to plant native, bird-friendly plants in their own gardens.

We hope that many people will visit our garden, especially this spring and summer when our new plants bud and bloom.

Thanks to the following HCAS volunteers who helped me with the planting this past fall: Alyson Browett, Debbie and Jimmy Shetterly, Al Hooks, Janet Palmer, Bob Cherry, Martha Cutler, and Doug Blackford.



## Come Bird @ Brookshire

Be sure to mark your calendars for the bird and nature walks at Brookshire Park in Boone which will continue on the first Saturday morning of each month of the year - rain, shine, or snow. Guy McGrane leads the walks which are free and open to the public. We especially invite beginners and people wanting to get back into birding. Spring and migrants are approaching!

Recent good finds at Brookshire Park, such as Rusty Blackbird, Sedge Wren, a photographed Screech Owl, and rare-in-winter Common Yellowthroat and House Wren, have made Brookshire one of the top eBird hotspots in the county.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the picnic shelter/restrooms in the main parking lot of the park which is on the New River about 2 miles east of downtown Boone, just north of where the river crosses under the 421 bridge. [Directions to Brookshire Park.](#)



Common Yellowthroat hidden in the snow at Brookshire Park.

Photo: Guy McGrane

## Miscellaneous Matters

### • **Carolinabirds: Birds and Birding in the Carolinas**

If you want to keep track of what birders across the Carolinas are seeing and where they're seeing them, the Carolinabirds email group out of Duke University is a great resource. For information on the forum and how to subscribe, go to <http://www.carolinanature.com/birds/cbirds.html>

### • **Book Recommendation**

Here's what HCAS member Robin Diaz had to say about *Feeding Wild Birds in America: Culture, Commerce & Conservation* by Paul Baicich, et al.

"If you haven't read this book, I recommend it. They did a very nice job presenting the development of bird feeding as it fits in with our cultural changes through the past 120 years. The layout and quality of the book are great, and Sue Wells is mentioned several times throughout the book. Paul also wrote *Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of North American Birds* as a Princeton Guide. He and Wayne Petersen write a free monthly online birding bulletin called *Birding Community E-bulletin*."

### • **National Audubon Society Rebates to Chapters**

NAS has a program that rebates to our local chapter all proceeds of new national memberships recruited by us. To join NAS, please visit our website, [www.HighCountryAudubon.org](http://www.HighCountryAudubon.org) and go to the Join/Donate page for instructions. On the NAS membership form, select the HCAS Chapter Code: R-62.

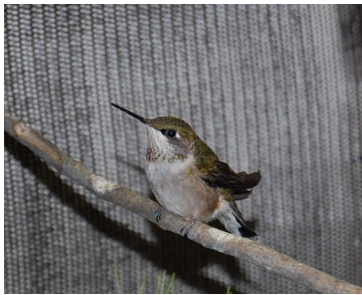


## Overwintering Patients Receive Special Care at MWRC

By Amber McNamara, DMV at MWRC

With every recuperated patient, May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center staff strives to release each individual back to the appropriate habitat when conditions are agreeable: weather, time of day, migration status, available food, etc. Each winter, the center accommodates patients that are not quite ready for release, or those that have healed completely but not in time for their annual migration. These patients have specific rehabilitation needs to keep them healthy until spring. Here are a few of their stories.

### Ruby-throated Hummingbird:



The RTHU was found on the ground at an elementary school, likely after hitting a window. A shoulder injury required approximately 6 weeks before healing well enough for sound flight; by that time, the hummingbirds

had moved south. The RTHU is fed hummingbird food (Nektar®) via hanging syringes, and the food is freshened 3 times per day. Planned release is in the spring when hummingbirds return.

### Summer Tanager:



This female SUTA was transferred from another rehabilitator, presumably following a trauma; she had feather damage on arrival but is now well-flighted, only needing to grow in her tail feathers. She is residing in an 8'x6'x3' indoor flight cage and is fed a diet of mealworms, wax-worms, insectivore pellets, and diced fruit. She will be re-

leased in the spring when tanagers return.

### American Coot:

Likely due to vehicular trauma, this AMCO had complete paralysis of the left leg on arrival in early November. With medication, numerous acupuncture and physical therapy sessions, and plenty of time in the bathtub, the *VERY FIESTY* coot has shown great improvement in the use of the leg.



Her diet consists of soaked waterfowl pellets, minced greens, mealworms, seeds, and dried shrimp. Healing is progressing nicely; the coot will likely be ready for release very soon. Since coots are present in this area over the winter, this bird can be released locally (near Asheville) when weather is agreeable.

### Queen Snake:



This Queen Snake was found locally (in August) with multiple puncture wounds around the head and neck. The snake was also gravid (pregnant) on arrival. With appropriate antibi-

otic treatment and wound management, the snake healed beautifully, but not in time for staff to feel comfortable releasing her until spring. She gets bathtub time 2-3 times per week. The diet consists of Crayfish, preferably newly molted. She will be released when the weather is warmer.

### Eastern Box Turtle (TECA):

Several TECAs are spending the winter at the MWRC. Since turtles heal incredibly slowly, their rehabilitation may not be complete before they might have hunkered down for winter in the wild. In the case of reptiles, special consideration is given to the temperature and humidity of the room, their diet, and the substrate on which they are housed. Hopefully, several will be released this spring.





## Birds & Beverages 2017

Friday, April 7, 2017

by Brenda Combs



Last April, Monty and I led six others on a delightful tour which combined birding with sampling wine. We found more than 30 species, and we're

hoping to do even better this year! Please join us, rain or shine, on **Friday, April 7** for *Birds & Beverages 2017*!

Our plan will be to leave at 9:00 a.m. from the parking lot in front of Lowes Foods off Hwy. 421 in Wilkesboro and have everyone follow us to the Roaring River Winery (<http://roaringrivervineyards.com/>). If you want to make bathroom trips or get coffee, plan to arrive by 8:30.

Roaring River Winery offers craft beer as well as wine-tasting. We will be birding along the way and plan to arrive at the winery around 9:30 a.m. Although it doesn't open until 11:00 a.m., they have given us permission to bird the entire 50 acres of the winery.

They have a small restaurant on site, so we will plan on having lunch there. They will be expanding their restaurant offerings by April. Prior to the event, we'd like everyone to look at the menu and make your choices, so that we can place the order ahead of time. They will have everything ready for our lunch after we finish birding, and then we'll be ready to head to the second winery, Jones von Drehle (<http://jonesvondrehle.com>).

We'll bird and sample wine at Jones von Drehle and then move on to a new experience. Across from the winery is Ridenour Ranch, alpaca farm, and store (<http://RidenourRanch.com>). Michael and Susie Ridenour have invited us to tour their farm, and Michael has offered to give each person in our group a gift bag of alpaca fiber for nesting material. We expect to finish our tour by 3 – 3:30 p.m., depending on birds and weather.



Roaring River Vineyards. Photo Monty Combs

## Come Bird @ My HotSpot

Mark your calendars now for these bird walks at local hot spots! 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. On May 9 and May 13, we'll head back to a higher elevation in Todd. Keep an eye on the Yahoo group email and the HCAS calendar for updates on details and directions.



### 1. Wilkes County (Brenda and Monty Combs: [bcombs@wilkes.net](mailto:bcombs@wilkes.net))

We'll meet at the W. Kerr Scott Visitor Center (elevation ~ 1100 feet) at 8:00 a.m. on **Saturday, March 18** 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 22.

### 2. Powder Horn Mountain (Janet and Richard Paulette: [janetpaulette@gmail.com](mailto:janetpaulette@gmail.com))

This year we're again scheduling two dates for birding the Blue Ridge escarpment at Powder Horn Mountain: **Tuesday, April 18**, (rain date Thursday, April 20) and **Saturday, April 22**. 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 2½-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: [badgerboy@wilkes.net](mailto:badgerboy@wilkes.net))

At 8 a.m. on **Sunday, April 30**, meet at Marley's Ford at the upper end of the W. Kerr Scott Reservoir in Wilkes County. To get there take 268 west from W. Kerr Scott dam for 5.7 miles, turn right on Marley Ford Road, just after the brown federal sign for Marley's Ford, and go about half a mile to the parking lot. 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.

Expect a nice mix of waterbirds, migrants, breeding birds, raptors and something unexpected. We usually stop at Mountain View Overlook and Blood Creek Overlook on the way out to scan for eagles, hawks and waterbirds.



## 2016 - The Year in Review

Story by Audrey Wilcox, photos by Teddy Wilcox

One of my favorite birding experiences this year was in early May, when Price Lake was partially drained to repair the boat dock, creating extensive mudflats. The mudflats were simply teeming with sandpipers - at least thirty each of Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, as well as four Least Sandpipers mixed in! The next day brought two Semipalmated Plovers, which had not been reported in Watauga in the past seven years! It is likely that so few shorebirds stop in the mountains during migration largely due to the lack of proper mudflat habitats.



Semipalmated Plovers

During June and July, I enjoyed hiking on Grandfather Mountain and becoming acquainted with the high-elevation breeders - most notably Hermit Thrushes and Yellow-rumped Warblers. These species are widespread during migration and winter, but there is something special about seeing them on their breeding grounds and hearing (and recording!) them sing. I find it very interesting that these species, whose main breeding ranges are much farther north, also nest in the spruce-fir zone of Grandfather Mountain. Apparently, in recent decades, they have expanded their summer ranges southward through the Appalachians where spruce-fir forest is available as far as southern NC. I wonder what stimulated them to begin utilizing the lower-latitude spruce-fir zones for nesting, and if this expansion will be permanent.

Pine Warblers are not known to nest in NC's northern mountains, but I have found evidence in the past year suggesting that they nest on or near the Boone Greenway. On July 3, I heard and recorded a Pine Warbler singing here from a stand of white pines. On August 2, I found a very young juvenile male Pine Warbler in the same vicinity. Its color pattern was very unusual - dull gray all over with a bright yellow belly! Since none of my field guides even show a Pine Warbler that young, I had to do further research before I could identify this bird. Juvenile wood-warblers acquire first-winter (immature) plumage very soon after becoming independent, so it is highly unlikely that one would stray far from its nest while still in juvenile plumage. I look



Juvenile Pine Warbler

forward to further investigating the possibility of nesting Pine Warblers here in the coming spring.

This fall and winter, the migrating and overwintering sparrows have been very interesting to study. Out of all eighty-nine White-crowned Sparrows I have seen during this time, every single one has been immature! Evidently very few adults migrate through or overwinter in the mountains. I wonder if this is also the case with other bird species whose ages cannot be so easily determined. Also of note, a small flock of Savannah Sparrows seems to be overwintering at Valle Crucis Park (seen throughout December and last seen on January 14), which is quite unusual for the northern mountains. Is this a result of this year's prolonged, unseasonably warm weather? Or is this a regular occurrence not associated with the milder temperatures?



Immature White-crowned Sparrow

Several times during the past four months (October-January), I have been surprised and pleased to hear two of my backyard Song Sparrows whose songs I recorded during the summer still singing around my home! Apparently these birds are staying in the same area year round, which leads me to suspect that all Song Sparrows nesting in the High Country may hold permanent territories. Last year, my neighborhood Song Sparrows sang much more in February and March than they did later in the spring - perhaps because they had overwintered here. Maybe this year I can get a better idea of how their song repertoires and singing behavior relate to their non-migratory lifestyle.

## Birding Argentina with Audubon North Carolina

Articles and photos by Martha Cutler



**Plush-crested Jay**

to our final stop in Iguazu National Park.



**Curtis, Miguel and Dave**

it wasn't...

A total of 310 species was observed during the trip along with numerous insect (mostly butterfly), reptile, amphibian and mammal species. Among the most striking birds were the Strange-tailed Tyrant, the Southern Screamer and the Yellow Cardinal. Some of us were privileged to get an amazing, extended, close-up look at a pair of Rufous-sided Crakes (any look at a Crake would be a privilege but this was exceptional) and for my birthday I asked for a special life bird and got a Spot-billed Toucanet which was perched on a branch above our heads and calling repeatedly as it rocked back and forth.

Dave and Curtis hope to guide future trips for ANC, and I would recommend these trips regardless of destination. The two are a great team, pleasant, knowledgeable and concerned with sharing their knowledge and making the trip a success for all involved.



**Vermilion Flycatcher**

## Grandfather Mountain News

Grandfather Mountain will be hosting Adult Field Courses this spring and summer. These adult education programs will examine specific aspects of the park ecosystem through just the right combination of fun field excursions and classroom presentations. Our course leaders are experts in their fields and include professors, naturalists, scientists, and acclaimed photographers, writers, historians, and artists.

The first Adult Field Course, *Spring Migration in the Canadian South*, will be led by HCAS's very own Jesse Pope, Executive Director of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, on **Saturday, April 29**. Participants of this six-hour program will explore the birds of Grandfather's mountaintop island with our resident expert birder, Jesse. The fee for the class is \$40 (or \$20 for Bridge Club members) and is limited to twelve participants.

See Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation's website [www.grandfather.com](http://www.grandfather.com), for minimum participant ages, other details about each course, and registration, which will open soon. Most courses run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and lunch will be eaten in the field. Please bring your own lunch.



Mile-high bridge. Photo: Wikipedia

## Kudos Corner

### HCAS Welcomes These New Members!

Sally Breslauer, Banner Elk  
Robin Siczek, Charlotte/ Powder Horn Mountain  
Laura Zimmerman, Boone  
Joey Johns, Chapel Hill  
Steve Dowlan, Vilas

### HCAS Thanks These Who Have Made Donations!

Sally Breslauer  
Laura Zimmerman  
Patrick, Annessa, Kennedy, and Grayson Miller  
in honor of Joe and Sue Miller  
Martha Cutler



# Through Our Lens



**Flying Belted Kingfisher.** Photo: Steve Gantt



**Snowy Egret,** Fort Pierce Inlet, FL  
Photo: Cindy Darling



**Great Blue Heron** from Yadkin Valley  
CBC. Photo: Al Hooks

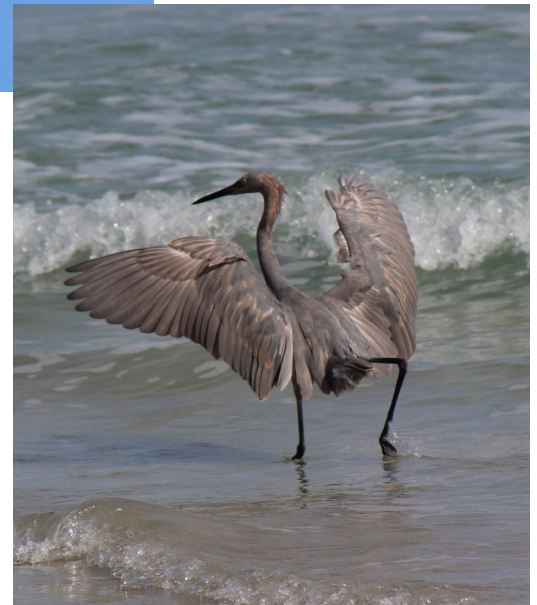


**Bald Eagle.** Photo: Beverly Saltonstall



Leucistic **Wild Turkey**  
Photo: Guy McGrane

**Iguazu Falls** Argentina  
Photo: Martha Cutler



**Reddish Egret,** Fort Pierce Inlet, FL  
Photo: Cindy Darling



# Through Our Lens



**White-breasted Nuthatch** (above),  
**Canada Warbler** (below)

Photos: Robin Diaz



**Red-shouldered Hawk.** Photo: Bob Williams

This photo was taken in Bob's backyard in Hickory on 12/23/2016. The bird is sitting on top of the feeder post. No feeder birds were harmed in the capture of this image! He went away hungry!



Rocky, the **Southern Flying Squirrel**

Photo: Robin Diaz



**Rare Bird Alert!**  
Photo:: Martha Cutler



**Rufescent Tiger-heron, Argentina**

Photo: Curtis Smalling



Can you spot the **Snow Goose & Greater White-fronted Goose** among all these **Canada Geese**?

Photo: Monty Combs



**Red-shouldered Hawk** sitting on Santa's head. Santa survived with no air loss. Photo: Bob Williams



**Greater White-fronted Goose**

Yadkin Valley CBC. Photo: Al Hooks

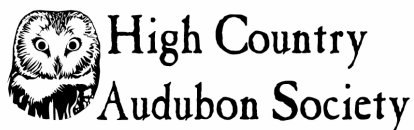


**White-crowned Sparrow**

Photo: Guy McGrane







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Visit our website for more information about HCAS and birding in the High Country. Group email members receive the newsletter via electronic mail. A link on the homepage has instructions for joining our group email, and for archived newsletters.

[www.HighCountryAudubon.org](http://www.HighCountryAudubon.org)

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### Support Our Birds and High Country Audubon Society!

**\$10 / year / person**

***Please renew your support by July 31st of each year.***

HCAS appreciates any additional contributions you make to support our local efforts related to protection of birds, their habitats, and our environment.

*The High Country Audubon Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization*

*Donations to the High Country Audubon Society are tax-deductible as allowed by applicable law.*

*For sponsorship information, please email*

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*Mail your check, name, address, telephone number, and email address to:*

**High Country Audubon Society**

**Attention: Membership**

**PO Box 3746, Boone, NC 28607**

### Donate with PayPal

You can now make donations to HCAS on our website, [www.HighCountryAudubon.org](http://www.HighCountryAudubon.org), through PayPal.

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February/March/April 2017

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

February		
<b>4</b> <b>Sat.</b>	<b>Come Bird @ Brookshire</b> Trip leader: Guy McGrane Meet at parking area near the picnic shelter Directions: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/j4u7waf">http://tinyurl.com/j4u7waf</a>	<b>8 a.m. – 10 a.m.</b>
<b>11</b> <b>Sat.</b>	<b>Birding at Burke's Garden, VA</b> Trip leader: Guy McGrane	<b>7:30 a.m.- 7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>17-20</b> <b>Fri.- Mon.</b>	<b>Great Backyard Bird Count</b> Where: wherever you want to do it! Who: everyone, hopefully! How: <a href="http://gbbc.birdcount.org/">http://gbbc.birdcount.org/</a>	
March		
<b>4</b> <b>Sat.</b>	<b>Come Bird @ Brookshire</b> Trip leader: Guy McGrane See Saturday, February 4th info above.	<b>8 a.m. – 10 a.m.</b>
<b>Mid- March</b>	<b>Not - Quite - Spring Birding: South to Savannah</b> 2-3 nights between Mar. 11 & Mar. 19 Check group email for final dates/details	
<b>18</b> <b>Sat.</b>	<b>Come Bird @ My HotSpot</b> Wilkes County Trip leaders: Monty & Brenda Combs Meet at W. Kerr Scott Visitor Center <b>Rain date: Wed. Mar. 22</b>	<b>8 a.m. – 11 a.m.</b>
<b>21</b> <b>Tues.</b>	<b>HCAS monthly meeting</b> Holiday Inn Express, Boone Program: Breeding Bird Survey Presented by: Merrill Lynch	<b>6:30 p.m.</b>

## Save the Date!

**Fri. May 5:** Spring Bird Count, Grandfather Mountain

**Sat. May 6:** Come Bird @ Brookshire Park

**Tues. May 9:** Come Bird @ My HotSpot, Todd, NC

**Sat. May 13:** Come Bird @ My HotSpot, Todd, NC

April		
<b>1</b> <b>Sat.</b>	<b>Come Bird @ Brookshire</b> See Saturday, February 4th. info left.	<b>8 a.m. – 10 a.m.</b>
<b>5</b> <b>Weekly Wed.</b>	<b>First of the Year Weekly Bird Walk</b> <b>Valle Crucis Community Park</b> Leader: Curtis Smalling Watauga Birding Hotline 828-265-0198	<b>8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.</b>
<b>7</b> <b>Fri.</b>	<b>Birds &amp; Beverages</b> Trip leaders: Brenda and Monty Combs Meet at Lowe's Food, Wilkesboro	<b>9 a.m. – ~ 3 p.m.</b>
<b>Mid-April</b> <b>TBA</b>	<b>Garlic Mustard Removal</b> Meet Camp Creek Environmental Studies Area and Valle Crucis Community Park	
<b>18</b> <b>Tues.</b>	<b>Come Bird @ My HotSpot</b> Powder Horn Mountain Trip Leaders: Janet and Richard Paulette <b>Rain date: Thurs. April 20</b>	<b>8 a.m. – 11 a.m.</b>
<b>18</b> <b>Tues.</b>	<b>HCAS monthly meeting</b> Holiday Inn Express, Boone Program: TBA	<b>6:30 p.m.</b>
<b>22</b> <b>Sat.</b>	<b>Come Bird @ My HotSpot</b> Powder Horn Mountain Trip Leaders: Janet and Richard Paulette	<b>8 a.m. – 11 a.m.</b>
<b>27-29</b> <b>Thur.- Sat.</b>	<b>Carolina Bird Club Winter Meeting</b> Winston-Salem, NC <a href="http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/meetings/">http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/meetings/</a>	
<b>29</b> <b>Sat.</b>	<b>Grandfather Mtn. Adult Field Course</b> <i>Spring Migration in the Canadian South</i> Led by: Jesse Pope See article on page 8 of this newsletter	<b>10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b>
<b>30</b> <b>Sun.</b>	<b>Come Bird @ My Hotspot</b> Marley's Ford, W. Kerr Scott Reservoir Trip Leader: Guy McGrane	<b>8 a.m. – 11 a.m.</b>