

# HIGH COUNTRY HOOTS

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

March/April 2012

Volume 4 Issue 2

## eBird? What's That?

By Bob Cherry

Back in the day, bird records were recorded by pencils, written on paper and stored away in filing cabinets or in desk drawers. Using the data was not easy and much good information was probably thrown away without ever being used. But times have changed.

Now recreational and serious birders have to decide how to keep their records. Some still put pencil to paper and record their sightings in a journal or on note cards. Increasingly, though, people are using electronic methods. Computer databases, birding software, and smart phone apps all allow birders to more easily keep and reference their records.

But even these are becoming old-fashioned. Now there is a way to not only record your sightings but you can immediately share them with the rest of the birding world.

And you can see what other birders

are finding in your neighborhood and around the world. You can also easily find out when different bird species migrate and how abundant they are in different locations.

How is this possible? Just use eBird and it's all possible.

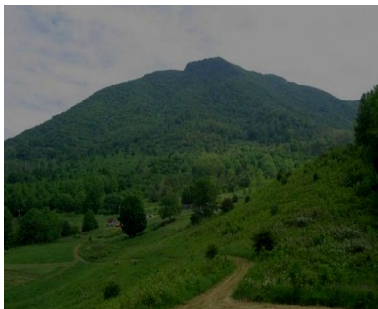
Not familiar with eBird? Then you need to join us at 6:30pm on March 20, for our monthly meeting. We will meet in the Visitor Center at the W. Kerr Scott Dam and Reservoir in Wilkesboro. The room has wireless Internet available so you may want to bring your own laptop or other device to follow along during the program

I will show you how to record your sightings and how to retrieve what others have reported. You'll also find out how you can better prepare for your next birding vacation and how to find new birding hotspots. All this even if you forget to bring a pencil.

eBird

## Shady Grove Gardens

Sustainability is the priority at Shady Grove Gardens located in Ashe County. Consisting of 76 acres of meadows, farmland, streams, and mountain bogs, owners Susan Wright and Brent Cochran have provided the High Country with cut flowers for homes and weddings, perennial starts, hayrides, a wedding site called "The Peak", (see photo) and an excellent birding site. Since 1986 they have turned native plants and sustainable methods into a successful business. Their specialty is shade/partial shade plants.



They are at The Watauga County Farmer's Market in Boone from May through October every year. Anyone can special order specific plants or flowers and pick them up at the Farmer's Market or at the nursery. Among the 200 varieties of perennials and shrubs and 50 types of annuals are 'Summer Sun' echinaceas, double white phlox, clematis, peonies, daylilies, hardy geraniums, rosemary, and lavender.

Susan and Brent will present our program at the monthly meeting on April 17 at the Watauga County Library. This will be a great chance to learn how they became such a successful plant nursery and provided a wonderful bird habitat in the process.

Many species of birds use the gardens as nesting sites, including the Golden-winged Warblers who will be returning in May to enjoy their summer home. Last May when HCAS hosted the Audubon North Carolina Annual

Continued on next page.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March		
4 Sun.	Field Trip to Burke's Garden, VA Trip leader: Jesse Pope (new date)	7:30am - all day
17 Sat.	Chapter Day: Asheboro Zoo	9:30am - 3pm
19 Mon.	Public Hearing re: A Vision for Boone Park at Watauga County Library	7pm - 9pm
20 Tues.	HCAS Monthly Meeting at Kerr Scott Visitor Center. Program: ebird with Bob Cherry	6:30pm

April		
10 Tues.	First Bird Walk at Daniel Boone Native Gardens. Trip leader: Bob Cherry	8:30am
17 Tues.	Field trip to Powder Horn Mtn. Meet at clubhouse parking lot. Trip leaders: The Paulettes	8:00am
17 Tues.	HCAS Monthly Meeting at Watauga Co. Library. Program: Shady Grove Nursery	6:30pm
28 Sat.	Bird Walk at Daniel Boone Native Gardens Trip leader: Doris Ratchford	after Wildflower Walk



## Pileated Woodpecker

- The Pileated Woodpecker, a year round resident of North Carolina, is the largest woodpecker in North America with a 15.7 - 19.3 inch wingspan.
- Rectangular holes are dug in trees to find ants, their favorite food.
- Pileated Woodpeckers are territorial and defend their territories all year round.
- The large feeding excavations that often attract other birds to both nest and feed are so large that they often cause the tree to break in half.
- They prefer large trees which are found in young forests. These trees, being taller often pose a lightning strike hazard for the nesting birds.
- The Pileated Woodpecker's numbers greatly declined as eastern forests were cleared. Conservation efforts have been largely successful and numbers are mostly increasing, although they are increasing slowly.

Information gathered from Cornell Labs.

## Flash! — Audubon Is Not Just About Birds

By Martha Cutler

The National Audubon Society Mission as stated on its web site: *To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.*

Here in the High Country the other non-bird wildlife we are privileged to enjoy includes numerous insects, butterflies, moths, dragonflies and fireflies, to name a few. Many of us may not be aware that there are a number of species of fireflies -- approximately 140 in the United States and Canada. Not all of these species produce light as adults, though all do glow in the larval stage.

Fireflies are actually beetles (members of the order Coleoptera). They spend most of their 1-2 years in the larval stage during which they may be observed on the ground and are often referred to as glowworms. (Other bioluminescent insect larvae are also referred to as glowworms.) After a brief period of pupation they live as adults for as few as 5 days to up to a month. The adult firefly's display is part of its mating behavior and varies according to species. In the Great Smoky Mountains National Park there are approximately 13 species of fireflies that display at night by flashing. Information about the more common of these species and a chart of their flash patterns can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/naturescience/firefly-flash-patterns.htm>



Two of the more interesting of the flashing fireflies are *Photinus carolinus*, the synchronous firefly, and *Phaesis reticulata* known commonly as the blue ghost firefly, both of which can be observed in our area.

According to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park website, the display pattern of *Photinus carolinus* is "a series of 5-8 flashes of yellow light, with all individuals [males] in an area displaying this pattern. This is followed by a period of darkness for 8-10 seconds. The synchronous stopping and starting of the flash sequence displayed by this firefly is unique." It's also at times a very dramatic display and has led to a

boom in firefly tourism in the park and the Gatlinburg area in early to mid June. For more information see [http://www.pigeonforge.com/synchronous\\_fireflies/](http://www.pigeonforge.com/synchronous_fireflies/), or go to <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>

The *Phaesis reticulata* or blue ghost firefly is less dramatic. It does not flash, but rather glows for 30-40 seconds at a stretch while floating several feet above the ground. As its name suggests, its light is pale blue or green. High Country Audubon hopes to take a trip to the DuPont State Forest this coming May 26 or 27 for a guided walk to see the blue ghost fireflies. Check our web site or group email for details. An article on *Phaesis reticulata* can be found at <http://www.blueridgenow.com/article/20070605/NEWS/70605004>

(Shady Grove Gardens continued)

Meeting, Susan and Brent gave us access to their property for a very enjoyable field trip for those lucky enough to go.

We appreciate Susan and Brent's gracious hospitality and commitment to conservation and look forward to welcoming them in April.

Anyone can bird the Shady Grove Gardens property for \$5.00 on your own, or for \$10.00 with a guide. Tours are available Sundays through Thursdays. Please contact them in advance.

For more information or to contact them, visit their website at [www.shady-grove-gardens.com](http://www.shady-grove-gardens.com).



### High Country Audubon Society Board

**Anita Clemmer** - President

**Bob Cherry** - Vice President, Conservation Chair,

**Brenda Combs** - Secretary

**Richard Paulette** - Treasurer

**Martha Cutler** - Field Trips & Social Events Chair

**Doris Ratchford** - Education Chair

**Janet Paulette** - Membership Chair

**Jesse Pope**, Past President

**Janet Palmer**

**Mary Carol Ochipa**

**Bettie Bond**

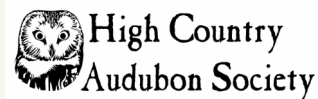
**Rosalind Pevsner**



Female Northern Cardinal. Photo by Anita Clemmer

*High Country Hoots* is published six 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 <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/highcountryaudubon>.

Visit our website at <http://highcountryaudubon.org> to join our group email.



PO Box 3746  
Boone, NC 28607

<http://highcountryaudubon.org>

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

A \$5 donation is requested for field trip participation.

All events and meeting times are subject to change.

For updated information please visit <http://highcountryaudubon.org>.

## HCAS Funds Bird Research Grant

High Country Audubon Society is proud to announce the availability of a grant for up to \$500 to be used to assist with bird research in the High Country. The grant will be called The Sue Wells Research Grant Program, in memory of Sue who was one of our Board Members when HCAS was first organized and remained an active member of our chapter until she passed away in 2010.

The grant program supports the HCAS mission, which is to engage in conservation, education and research for the birds of western North Carolina. Applicants may be high school or undergraduate students and must be engaged in research or field work in ornithology or other study that directly benefits birds or bird habitats.

Bob Cherry has designed the application which is posted on our website. Applications must be received by June 1, 2012 and the winner will be announced at our Annual Meeting in July, 2012. Within one year of completion of research, the recipient will be required to give HCAS a presentation detailing the results of the project. We look forward to advancing our conservation efforts with this new grant.

## Notes of Interest:

Keep an eye out for impromptu birding walks during the spring. We may get extra trips together if the opportunity arises.

We have a booth space for the Wooly Worm Festival 2012!

HCAS has established a Corporate Membership status for any business which would like to be a part of our mission. The yearly fee is \$50 and we will give them a spot on our website for their logo and feature them in our newsletter when they join up.

Remember that we have a Facebook Page that you can visit to find out about birding trips or upcoming events or just to share bird photos or comments. In order to use Facebook, you need to create an account at Facebook.com. After setting up an account, from the home page, click on "find friends" on the top menu bar. Click on "Add a Friend" for anyone you would like to follow. "If I can do it, anyone can," says Anita Clemmer. Remember that the settings allow you determine what information you want seen on Facebook. Right now you can go to Facebook and see photos from Curtis Smalling and Donald Mullaney in Nicaragua! It's awesome!

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

**Annual membership dues are \$10 for an individual  
Field trips are \$5 for an individual for each trip**

**OR**

**\$25 for an individual covers annual dues and all field trips for the year**

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

**High Country Audubon Society  
Attention: Membership  
PO Box 3746  
Boone, NC 28607**

***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.***