

HIGH COUNTRY HOOTS

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

Spotlight on HCAS's New President

Bob Cherry became High Country Audubon Society's fourth president with his election at the annual membership meeting in July. He replaced Anita Clemmer who had completed her two- year term.

Bob is originally from Chicago and lived there until enrolling at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, where he earned a bachelor's degree in forestry. He moved to Boone in 1992 and received a master's of science in biology from Appalachian State University in 2001.



Bob and his wife, Jamie Leigh, have two children, Michael and Kelly. Bob is an avid hiker, backpacker and birder.

Beginning his career at Lincoln Home National Historic Site (IL) and spending time at parks in Massachusetts, Texas, Montana and California, Bob has worked for the National Park Service since 1979. He moved to the High Country in 1992 as a wildlife biologist for the Blue Ridge Parkway. His work with the Parkway's birds and other animals has helped him to appreciate the importance of conserving our natural landscape here in the High Country, including conserving bird habitats.

He began working to support local conservation efforts as a board member of the Watauga Land Trust in 1996.

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First Sue Wells Research Grant Awarded

At the HCAS annual meeting on Tuesday, July 17, President Anita Clemmer presented a \$500 check to Jessica Krippel, the first recipient of the Sue Wells Research Grant. Jessica is a graduate student in biology at Western Carolina University.

Jessica spoke to the group at Lees-McRae College's Elk Valley Preserve and Field Station about her proposed research which will seek to test the hypothesis that aggressive male song sparrows will have more extra-pair

young than nonaggressive males. It will also test the hypothesis that they will not have better overall reproductive success because, although they may have more extra-pair copulations, this behavior will leave them more susceptible to being cuckolded, as they are leaving their females ungarded in an attempt to seek out extra-pair copulations.

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October/November/December 2012

Volume 4 Issue 5

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October		
16	HCAS monthly meeting	6:30 pm
Tues.	Holiday Inn Express, Boone	
	Program: Ron Morris	
	Alaskan wildlife (viewing) adventures	
17	Last 2012 Valle Crucis bird walk	8:30 am
Wed.	NC Audubon's Curtis Smalling	

December		
11	HCAS Nov/Dec Holiday Social	6:30 pm
Tues.	Holiday Inn Express, Boone	
	Finger food, photo show, & white elephant gift exchange	
22	Christmas Bird Count	All day
Sat.	Grandfather Mountain	
26	Christmas Bird Count	All day
Wed.	Catawba Valley	

Wildlife-viewing Adventures in Alaska

This month's meeting of the High Country Audubon Society will be Tuesday, October 16 at 6:30 PM at the Holiday Inn Express in Boone. Ron Morris, who co-writes the column "Bird's-Eye View" for the Winston-Salem Journal, will present a program on his wildlife-viewing adventures in Alaska's Denali National Park, Kenai Peninsula and Inside Passage. The program is free and open to the public.

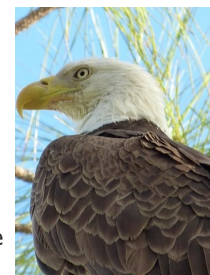


Photo by Dan Tudor, Cape Coral, Florida

Grandfather Mountain An Official Hawk Count Location

by Landis Wofford

Grandfather Mountain has joined 200 other localities as an official Hawk Count site. Official sites are designated by the Hawk Migration Association of North America and charged with identifying, tracking and logging the numbers and types of raptors across the country.

"It's a little bit like fishing," said Director of Education and Natural Resources, Jesse Pope.

"You can sit for hours without seeing anything, but when a large group of broad wing hawks comes through it's completely worth it."

Since Grandfather Mountain is the tallest mountain the area, no view is obstructed and Linville Peak, the rocky peak just across the Mile High Swinging Bridge, serves as a perfect vantage point with its 360-degree views.

The peak is a particularly good place to observe rap-

tor migration where as many as 1,000 raptors a day (the record being over 4,000 in one day) can be seen making the trip south from September to December. All sorts of raptors have been spotted from just across the Swinging Bridge including bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and peregrine falcons.

For more information about the Hawk Migration Association of North America, visit their website at www.hmana.org/. To review hawk count numbers from Grandfather and other accredited Hawk Count sites, visit www.hawkcount.org.

WANT TO HELP?

In the first twenty-five days of the hawk count at Grandfather Mountain, with almost 90 hours of observing, 2,150 raptors had been observed, including 2,027 broad-winged hawks alone. Other raptors included 11 bald eagles, 13 sharp-shinned hawks, 6 peregrine falcons and 7 other types of raptors.



High Country Audubon Society Board

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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.



**High Country
Audubon Society**

PO Box 3746
Boone, NC 28607

[http://](http://highcountryaudubon.org)

highcountryaudubon.org

E-mail: highcountrybirder@yahoo.com

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

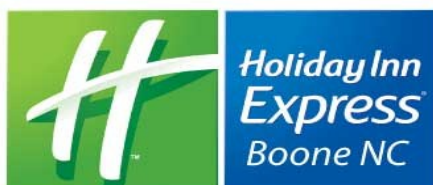
All events and meeting times are subject to change.

For updated information please visit

<http://highcountryaudubon.org>.

Corporate Sponsors

Holiday Inn Express, Boone, NC



WingN'It, Banner Elk NC



Daniel Boone Gardens, Boone, NC



Daniel Boone Native Gardens

Even though it's been there for over 50 years, the Daniel Boone Native Gardens is still one of Boone's best kept secrets. With a mission of conservation and education about native Appalachian plant species, as well as North Carolina's plants, the Gardens are High Country Audubon Society's newest corporate sponsor.

There are hundreds of wildflower species at the Daniel Boone Native Gardens, as well as flowering shrubs and trees of great beauty. The exact sequence and combination of blooms depends on many factors – rainfall or snowfall during the winter, a late freeze, wind and, of course, sunshine. The three acres of wildflowers in this treasure trove are arranged in a series of garden “rooms.” You will discover the Bog garden, Fern garden, Rockery, and a hidden meditation retreat, along with a Rhododendron Thicket.

Even though the Garden's primary focus is on native plants, it also provides habitat for resident and migratory birds. Native plants provide nesting sites and food for birds and other animals that non-native landscaping seldom give. Whether it's winterberry helping resident birds survive the cold winter, trees providing safe nesting sites, or dogwood berries that fuel many birds' fall migrations, all of these plants have something our native birds need to survive and reproduce.

This summer HCAS took advantage of this birding opportunity and the convenience of the site by offering monthly walks for the local community. Seven walks led by seven HCAS volunteers

took both new and experienced birds through the Gardens and to Strawberry Hill across the street. Early season walks revealed migrants passing through, and during the summer several birds were found nesting in the area.

Although the property on Horn in the West Drive is owned by the Town of Boone, management falls to a statewide 15-member volunteer Board of Governors. From its inception, the Gardens have been financed completely through monetary gifts from the garden members and the local community.

The origin for the Gardens began in 1957 when Landscape Architect H. Stuart Orloff of Hickory recommended that a small area near a school with a botany department could be reserved for studying native plants. During the 1959 convention of the Garden Club of North Carolina, the project was adopted. An eight-acre lot on a naturally landscaped hillside adjoining Horn in the West outdoor drama was leased from the town of Boone for a period of 49 years at \$1 per year.

In 1961 Greene Construction Company began grading the lot and constructed walls, walks, and a pond. Boulders

from nearby Rich Mountain were brought to the area called The Rockery. When the Gardens were ready for planting, Aldridge Nurseries of Crossnore managed the installation. Garden clubs throughout the state assisted by sending plants from their particular areas to add to the collection.



Opening in 1963, the Daniel Boone Native Gardens was dedicated as part of the Tercentenary celebration of the crossing of the Blue Ridge by Daniel Boone. The stone Gatehouse now at the entrance was designed by Wilkesboro architect Aiji Tashiro in 1967. Original admission was fifty cents. The Gatehouse is rimmed with a split-rail fence built by the same method that area pioneers used. In this area, see mountain favorites such as Jack-in-the-Pulpit, wild ginger and trilliums.

The main axis of the Gardens, with graceful slopes and shaded ravines, is a wide grassy allée extending from the upper (north) entrance to the lower (south) entrance. The allée is marked with massive wrought iron gates forged by Burnsville's Daniel Boone VI, a direct descendant of the great pioneer, and donated by the Southern Appalachian Historical Association. Centering the allée was a very old mountain cherry tree of the Black Heart variety. The tree has since died, but an offshoot is now in the Wedding lawn.

With help from the Watauga County Cooperative Extension, local Master Gardeners now manage the Rockery as a centerpiece for native plants attracting butterflies and birds.

The Squire Boone Cabin dates back more than a century and is built of hand-hewn logs, some eighteen inches wide. The cabin, formerly located in the wilderness below Grandfather Mountain, was originally built by Jesse Boone Cragg, a great-great-grandson of Jesse Boone, youngest brother of Daniel. Youngsters can get an appreciation of a rugged lifestyle before the existence of electric lights, cell phones, and email.

The Reflection Pond in front of the Squire Boone Cabin features many varieties of rhododendron, mountain laurel, and conifers. Walk a few steps to the Meditation Garden to enjoy a bowery of ferns and violets surrounded by a circle of hemlocks.

Nearby, you'll notice the Wishing Well enclosed by mosses, liverworts and hornworts on rocks and trees. The Bog Garden, dedicated in 1992, has as many as 50 different bog and wetland plants. Look for tiny sundew, the Grass of Parnassus, trailing wolfsbane and white turtle head. You may notice carnivorous plants.

Note from the President

When I said that I would be willing to be a candidate for president of the Chapter, I knew there would be some extra work involved with serving in that office. But until I actually got going I didn't realize how much work it actually is. This makes me that much more impressed with the job that Anita Clemmer did as President before my term began.

Anita has been on the Board of Trustees for several years and served as president the last two. Of course, Anita didn't work alone; she had the help of several very active members and a strong Board. But it was Anita that tied it all together and kept things moving.

During her term we continued offering field trips to both local and distant birding sites, produced an attractive newsletter every couple of months, began working with Cove Creek School to get students interested in birds, and started a grant program to help with bird research in the High Country. All of this has made HCAS a vibrant organization that helps birds and birders alike.

My goal is to continue all of this good work, and even to increase our Chapter's programs during my term over the next two years. But that requires the help of good people like Anita and the many others who are keeping things going.

Swift Night Out –Revisited

by Beverly Saltonstall

Prior to attending the "Swift Night Out" at Lees-McRae College with the High Country Audubon Society, I had never seen a chimney swift. Seeing them that night was quite an amazing spectacle to say the least. Even my husband, a non-birder, enjoyed watching the hundreds, if not thousands, of birds gathering and circling in the sky, only to vanish into the chimney just when the skies turned dark. After telling our friends what a great time we had, twelve of our neighbors got together to go see the chimney swifts. I am sure that 50% of them were only going because we were going to a great Mexican restaurant for dinner before the "show". One guy in particular, was sure he was going to be bored out of his mind, but didn't want to miss dinner.

After a great dinner, we parked our chairs on the Lees-McRae College lawn, and true to form, the chimney swifts started to arrive. From the east, from the west, the north and the south they came, and the chattering call of the birds got louder and louder. Just when you thought no more were coming, more came! There was no way to count them. They put on an amazing show and all were impressed, even the "bored" guy. Then the questions started. Do they do this every night? What do they do once they get into the chimney? Are they here all winter? I sheepishly admitted that I had no clue. I know virtually nothing about these birds, so a little research on the Internet came up with some interesting information.



Chimney Swifts prefer to nest in caves and hollow trees. After man started building homes with chimneys, the birds decided that a house chimney would work just fine. Now with the new construction of chimneys designed to keep rain and birds out, the population of chimney swifts is declining.

Chimney swifts have specially designed claws and their tail feathers have bristles that allow them to cling to chimney walls and other such vertical surfaces. They are unable to perch on branches as do other birds. In fact, the chimney swift spends most of its time flying, only resting at night and when nesting.

According to information posted by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the chimney swift even bathes in flight. It glides along the water, smacks its breast on the water, then bounces up and shakes the water from its plumage as it continues its flight. How cool is that?

- The chimney swift is found east of the Rocky Mountains and arrives in North America in late March and leaves by early November. They migrate across the Caribbean Sea and Central America, and winter in the Amazon Basin of Peru.
- It is interesting to note that no matter how big the chimney, there will only be one active nest; however the nesting pair is quite tolerant of having other chimney swifts roost in "their" chimney.
- The female lays 3-5 eggs in a small nest made of twigs that is glued together with saliva, and attached to a vertical surface. The tiny hatchlings are capable of clinging to the walls almost immediately after birth. The young have a loud, very high-pitched call. As long as the young are making this sound, they are incapable of flight, and if forced from the chimney they will not survive as the parents cannot care for them outside the chimney. Once breeding season is over the chimney swifts begin to congregate by the thousands at suitable roosting sites such as the chimney at Lees-McRae College. Here they wait for the first major cold front to come through to signal that it is time to head south.
- Just like the purple martin, the chimney swift relies on man-made structures. Many plans for building a chimney swift tower can be found on the Internet. As voracious insect eaters, they are certainly a good bird to have in your yard. If you have ever thought about installing a purple martin house to control mosquitoes in your yard, do your research and you will find you are better off having a family of Chimney Swifts.

For more information on Chimney Swifts, visit <http://chimneyswifts.org>, and to see the chimney swifts in action you can watch a video recorded by HCAS's own Janet Paulette at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifm_1YS-aoM. Much of the information for this article has been taken from an article by the Driftwood Wildlife Association of Austin, Texas.

The Science of Birds

Saving the Date

Many birders who track the dates of first arrivals of birds in the spring and last sightings in the fall are surprised at the consistency of many bird species. A new study reveals just how precise some birds can be.

Kevin Fraser and Bridget Stutchbury of York University placed dime-sized geolocators on the backs of wood thrushes in Pennsylvania and in Costa Rica. These birds were tracked over multiple seasons. The geolocators recorded sunrises and sunsets which allowed the researchers to estimate the longitude and latitude of each bird throughout their migration. This in turn showed when the birds migrated and the routes that they took.

Spring migration was much more consistent for the birds than fall migration with some birds leaving Costa Rica and arriving in Pennsylvania on the same dates in different years. Overall the average difference between years was just three days. Variation in fall migration was much greater with differences between males (faster flyers) and females, and between juvenile birds (later migration) and adult birds.

And while we think of birds having migratory routes that funnel birds down relatively narrow paths, many of the birds in this study varied their routes by large distances. Some birds' paths differed by hundreds of kilometers from year to year. This might be due to bad weather or strong winds encountered during the travels and the decision to avoid these conditions.

As you say goodbye to "your" birds this fall wish them well with their journeys. But know that they will likely return the same time next spring to be counted and enjoyed for another year.



Cont. from Page 1 — First Sue Wells Research Grant Awarded

After Jessica spoke, Anita introduced Bill and Peg Steiner of Asheville who surprised Jessica by presenting her with a matching check for \$500 and an original numbered Audubon print of a song sparrow. Bill Steiner is the author of the 2003 comprehensive guide *Audubon Art Prints - A Collector's Guide to Every Edition* and also maintains a private collection of Audubon prints.

The purpose of the Sue Wells Research Grant Program is to provide high school or university students with financial assistance for research concerning birds of the North Carolina High Country. Funds must be used in support of research or field work in ornithology, or in an area of study that will directly benefit birds or bird habitat.

Donations to the Sue Wells Research Grant program are always welcomed and will be used to support future research projects. Donations may be mailed to HCAS, PO Box 3746, Boone, NC 28607. Please indicate that the donation is for the grant program.

Congratulations, Jessica, and we look forward to hearing about your results after your research is completed!

In 1989 Sue was instrumental in creating the National Bird-Feeding Society and led the movement to help make backyard bird feeding the successful hobby it is today.

Cont. from Page 1 — Spotlight on HCAS's New President

In 1997 he co-founded High Country Conservancy and then helped guide the merger that created Blue Ridge Conservancy in 2010. Bob is presently on the Board of Trustees of Blue Ridge Conservancy.

Bob has been active with HCAS since its founding and has consistently raised conservation issues with our members and urged all of us to become involved in conservation efforts.

Cont. from Page 3 — Daniel Boone Gardens

In 1973, the Fernery was dedicated. Several years later the Gazebo was added. Follow the path here to the Rhododendron Thicket to see a collection of *Rhododendron catawbiense* and *Rhododendron maximum* which offer protection for small wildlife and serve as a birdwatchers haven.



We welcome the Daniel Boone Native Gardens as an HCAS sponsor and encourage you to visit often. The Gardens are located at 651 Horn in the West Drive, Boone, N.C. Open from May to October, admission donation is \$2 for adults, free for children under 16. For more information see <http://www.danielboonegardens.org/> or call 828-264-6390.

About Sue Wells

The late Sue Wells was a driving force in the creation of High Country Audubon Society and served on the Board of Trustees until 2010.

Sue was born in St. Cloud, MN in 1938. She moved to Northbrook, IL in 1963 where she and her husband raised their three children. They later maintained a home in Sugar Mountain, NC and became involved in HCAS activities.

All who knew Sue appreciated her as a woman of warm spirit and great wit who lived her life "looking for a string of small satisfactions, tossed like sequins on the fabric of everyday life," as her favorite quote so poignantly expressed. She loved birds and Beethoven, gardens and dogs, Scrabble and Spain, poems and odes, golf and grandchildren, family and French horns, motherhood, scholarship, friendship and being married to Ralph for 51 years.

Holiday Social and White Elephant Gift Exchange

Tuesday, December 11, 6:30 pm

By Martha Cutler

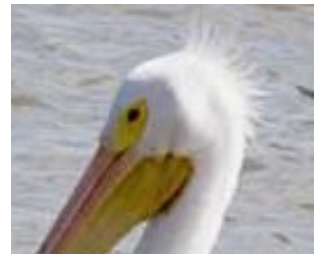
We've decided to try something new this year. Since our regularly scheduled November and December meetings conflict with holiday events, we're combining those two meetings into a party on December 11 at 6:30 pm at the Holiday Inn Express in Boone.



We'll provide beverages, including beer and wine. Please bring finger food and birding stories from the past year to share. Bob Cherry is going to put together a slide show of your photos to show during the social - please send Bob your photos of birds, people, and places we go birding. (bcherry001@gmail.com)

We'll also have a white elephant gift exchange. Please bring one wrapped item - a white elephant or gag gift or something of minimal value (don't spend big bucks!). Wrapping it to fool people is part of the fun!

A wonderful bird is the pelican
His bill will hold more than his belican.
He can take in his beak
Food enough for a week,
But I'm darned if I see how the helican.
~Dixon Lanier Merritt



Note of Interest

Between Heaven & Earth: Birds in Ancient Egypt

Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
October 16, 2012 - July 28, 2013

Tate Paulette, son of HCAS members Janet and Richard Paulette, is an advanced graduate student in Mesopotamian archaeology at the University of Chicago. He forwarded information to them about an Oriental Institute exhibit which might be of interest to all you birdwatchers out there. The exhibit explores birds and their connections with all aspects of ancient Egyptian culture.

Check out <http://oi.uchicago.edu/museum/special/birds/> to learn more about the exhibit. You can also download for free the exhibition catalog which includes essays and descriptions of the forty artifacts in the exhibit. <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/catalog/oimp/oimp35.html>

Become a Supporter of HCAS

\$10/year/person (plus \$5 suggested donation per field trip attended)
OR

\$25/year/person (includes all field trips attended)

Annual corporate sponsorship: \$50

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.

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

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