



Audubon NORTH CAROLINA

[SPRING 2014]



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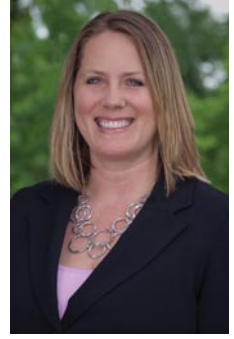
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[FROM THE DIRECTOR]

HEATHER STARCK HAHN
Executive Director
Audubon North Carolina



Like many of you, I am deeply concerned about the future of our beautiful state. By 2030, the population of North Carolina is expected to increase by 30 percent, adding nearly 3 million people. According to the Green Growth Toolbox, more than 1 acre of land is developed for each new resident of North Carolina. Increasing urbanization will leave scant resources for our resident birds and the millions of other birds that pass through North Carolina during migration.

One of the ways Audubon North Carolina is addressing this reality is with our newest initiative - the Bird-Friendly Communities program. One year ago we convened people representing 25 organizations – including Audubon chapters, state agencies, and non-profit organizations – to determine how we can begin to offset the declining resources available for birds – food, water, shelter, and nesting sites.

It is crucial that we help birds survive and thrive in each habitat that they use – from the vast expanses of public lands being managed for bird health, to the small backyard of every citizen. We believe that, together, we can give birds “one more day.” Imagine the small effort it takes to be sure that when a migrating bird stops in a city park, exhausted after flying south all night, it finds the native plants, food sources and water it needs to refuel and continue on.

As you read this newsletter dedicated to our Bird-Friendly Communities program, I want you to be inspired to take one small, doable step to create a bird-friendly community where you live. One person, one backyard, one native plant, one nest box at a time, we can, and will, give the birds that share North Carolina with us one more day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Starck Hahn". The script is fluid and cursive.

Heather Starck Hahn

PS. Be sure to check out our video on the Lookin' for a Good Home campaign where citizens are installing nest boxes for the Brown-headed Nuthatch. Go to www.youtube.com/user/audubonnc.



Bird-Friendly Communities

Most Americans make their homes in cities, suburbs or towns. Residential development often alters and disturbs wildlife habitat. For example, meadows that once supported grassland birds become disconnected patches, while forests that provided nesting sites for other species disappear from the landscape. Not only are there fewer places to nest, feed and rest, human presence and activity can degrade the habitat that remains and create hazards for birds. Collisions with buildings, ingestion of pesticides, competition with invasive non-native bird species, and loss of food sources can make life precarious for the birds that most closely share our own habitat. Coupled with natural environmental threats, these manmade challenges contribute to declines among a broad range of both resident and migratory bird populations.

Fortunately for birds, people living in towns and cities can play a critical role in fostering healthy wildlife and communities. People are at the heart of conservation solutions. Audubon chapters, nature centers, and state programs across the country work with communities to improve urban habitat for birds and other wildlife. We empower people to make bird-friendly lifestyle choices in their homes, backyards and communities. Through the Bird-Friendly Communities program, we partner with people to have more direct impact on thousands of acres where birds and people live together. Audubon inspires the one in five adults who watch birds to make daily lifestyle choices that add up to real conservation impact.

Audubon knows that we can each do a lot to benefit birds in our own spaces. Whether at home, work, school, or church –

we can all make simple, small choices that benefit birds. Turning out the lights in our office buildings during migration, replacing non-native and invasive plants with native options, putting up nest boxes and feeders, protecting our trees and green spaces, and many other actions will have positive impacts for birds.

Our Bird-friendly Communities initiative gives families and communities the tools they need to make that difference. Audubon and partners work to protect remaining natural areas, but we need citizens to join us by taking actions that make all of the places we live, work and play bird-friendly. By doing so, we help priority species, common species and migrant visitors survive and thrive while at the same time we create healthier communities for people.



What is Audubon’s Vision for Bird-Friendly Communities in North Carolina?

Audubon North Carolina is leading the Atlantic Flyway in creating a robust Bird-Friendly Communities (BFC) program. One year ago we recruited representatives from state agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, businesses and Audubon chapters to a Bird-Friendly Communities implementation team. Their mission: to create a set of priority actions for North Carolina that would engage people in the protection of birds in a meaningful way by focusing on actions that add up to big conservation impact for birds that live in or visit North Carolina’s cities and towns during their annual life cycle.

The BFC team got immediately to work creating this vision statement:

“Bird-friendly communities across North Carolina give birds the opportunity to succeed by providing connected habitat dominated by native plants; minimizing threats posed by the built environment; and engaging people of all ages and backgrounds in stewardship of nature.”

BIRDS AND HABITATS UNDER PRESSURE

With the population in North Carolina rising to an estimated 12 million people over the next decade, the pressure on remaining habitats will be unprecedented. Housing, roads, energy, water and other infrastructure needs will all create challenges for birds. Audubon’s approach of working with a variety of partners, and empowering individuals, businesses, and others who manage our developed spaces to make easy and effective choices in consideration of birds will make a difference. This is an area of conservation where every citizen can be engaged to mitigate these impacts.

The team then prioritized the following areas for Audubon North Carolina’s first phase of action 1) birds that collide with buildings in urban cities, 2) birds that need food from native plant sources and 3) birds that need nesting cavities to successfully breed and thrive.

Lights Out North Carolina

During spring and fall migration, millions of birds pass through North Carolina, often flying at night. Studies show that upward facing bright lights can confuse birds that then become disoriented and collide with windows of tall buildings. Lights Out North Carolina programs have begun in our three largest cities – Charlotte, Raleigh, and Winston-Salem. Volunteers walk the city streets collecting and documenting bird species killed by collisions with specific buildings. With this information, these volunteers then talk with building owners and property managers about turning out building lights from 11 p.m. to dawn during spring and fall migration. Five buildings in Winston-Salem turn their lights out for birds, reducing bird collisions by about half, and Audubon members in Charlotte and Raleigh are advocating for similar help for our migrating birds.

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Bird-Friendly Communities Focal Bird Species

Although the activities of the Bird-Friendly Communities Program will benefit all bird species, Audubon has chosen five species to particularly focus on. They were selected because they are responsibility species for North Carolina (a high percentage of the world population uses NC habitat) and because there is a good chance of positive impact on their populations through the actions of citizens. They are the Brown-headed Nuthatch, Prothonotary Warbler, Chimney Swift, Wood Thrush, and Painted Bunting. The protection of each of these birds also helps other birds that share their habitat.

Bird-Friendly Communities Implementation Team

The partner organizations that make up the team significantly enhance the effectiveness of this collaborative initiative, and we are grateful for their time and dedication.

Airlie Gardens

B+O Design Studio

Davidson College

Green Growth Toolbox, a program of the
NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Mecklenburg County Division of
Natural Resources

NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher

NC Birding Trail

NC Interfaith Power & Light

NC Museum of Natural Sciences

NC Native Plant Society

NC Partners in Flight

NC Wildlife Federation

Reedy Creek Nature Center

Stevens Nature Center

The Nature Conservancy

The North Carolina Arboretum

Cape Fear Audubon Society

Wake Audubon Society

New Hope Audubon Society

T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society

Audubon Society of Forsyth County

Mecklenburg Audubon Society

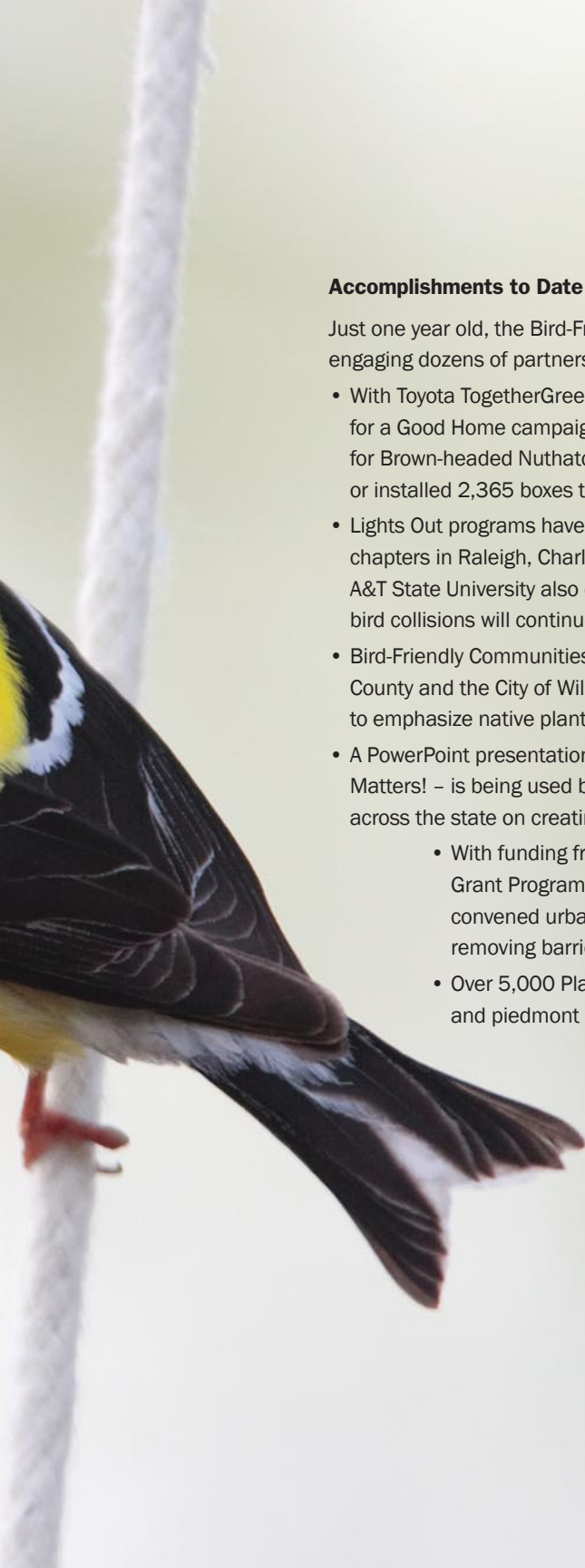
High Country Audubon Society

Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society

Great Smoky Mountains Audubon Society





Accomplishments to Date

Just one year old, the Bird-Friendly Communities program is already engaging dozens of partners and hundreds of citizens.

- With Toyota TogetherGreen funding, Audubon launched the Lookin' for a Good Home campaign encouraging folks to put up nest boxes for Brown-headed Nuthatches. Our partners have already sold, built, or installed 2,365 boxes towards a goal of 10,000 by next year.
- Lights Out programs have been successfully initiated by Audubon chapters in Raleigh, Charlotte and Winston-Salem. Students at NC A&T State University also did a pilot study in Greensboro. Monitoring bird collisions will continue to determine program effectiveness.
- Bird-Friendly Communities team members persuaded New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington to revise their municipal plant lists to emphasize native plants.
- A PowerPoint presentation – Bird-Friendly Landscaping: Your Yard Matters! – is being used by citizens and chapters to spread the word across the state on creating bird-friendly backyards.
 - With funding from the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program of the NC Forest Service, Audubon convened urban foresters and others to begin discussing removing barriers to planting native trees in cityscapes.
 - Over 5,000 Plant Native for Birds guides for the coastal and piedmont regions have been distributed.
 - Forsyth Audubon Society and Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County, with fellowship funding from Audubon Toyota TogetherGreen to chapter member Kim Brand, is creating six bird-friendly yards and two public spaces in low-income neighborhoods. Educational bird walks are offered to neighborhood residents and school children to raise awareness of urban birds.



Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group

“All birds are pressed for places to nest. When Dr. Mark Stanback asked us if we would build boxes for the Brown-headed Nuthatch, we were happy to help. We like saving wildlife. I know Audubon wants 10,000 boxes to go up this year. We’re ready to build them!”

– Frank Newell, founder of Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group

Frank Newell started Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group (EBRG) in 1989 with one mission: to stop the rapid decline of bluebirds. During the 1960s and ‘70s with the onset of urbanization and the decline in natural nesting cavities, bluebirds were in trouble. In response,



Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group began building bluebird nest boxes. With 208,605 boxes built and largely distributed through the State Employees’ Credit Union branches, the bluebird population has dramatically increased. Frank thinks that a similar success can be found in building and distributing nest boxes for the Brown-headed Nuthatch, which normally excavates its own cavities in pine trees. A

nest box for a nuthatch is similar in appearance to a bluebird nest box but the hole is much smaller. Frank has had no trouble adapting his machinery to create the boxes with smaller holes. With EBRG building the boxes and citizens installing them, Frank believes we will make a big difference for the nuthatch, just like EBRG did for the bluebird.

North Carolina Birding Trail

“The North Carolina Birding Trail has been a committed partner in the Bird-Friendly Communities initiative since the January 2013 inaugural meeting. Audubon North Carolina has a solid history of effective conservation work in mountain and coastal North Carolina, and it is good news for birds that the organization is now focusing energy on the more urbanized piedmont region as well. We are impressed with the speed, dedication, and efficiency of the project thus far and are confident that this partnership will continue to make significant contributions to bird conservation and education.”

– Scott Anderson, NC Birding Trail Coordinator, NC Wildlife Resources Commission



The mission of the North Carolina Birding Trail, a six-agency partnership begun in 2004, is to champion conservation of North Carolina’s bird habitat by promoting sustainable bird watching activities, economic opportunities, and education. The Birding Trail links birders and nature-based tourists with 328 birding sites and the local communities in which they are found. North Carolina Audubon chapters are installing Brown-headed Nuthatch boxes at many Birding Trail sites across the state.

www.ncbirdingtrail.org

North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences

“Each year, millions of birds are killed when they collide with windows. A just-published study by researchers at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center analyzed data from 23 cities – including Winston-Salem, thanks to hardworking Forsyth Audubon volunteers – to come up with

an estimate of 365 to 988 million birds killed each year in the U.S. Many nocturnal migrants fly over urban centers on their way to their non-breeding homes. Unfortunately, especially when conditions like fog cause such birds to fly lower, they are attracted to building lights. They become disoriented, fatigued, and then collide into the windows. Research by Field Museum staff in

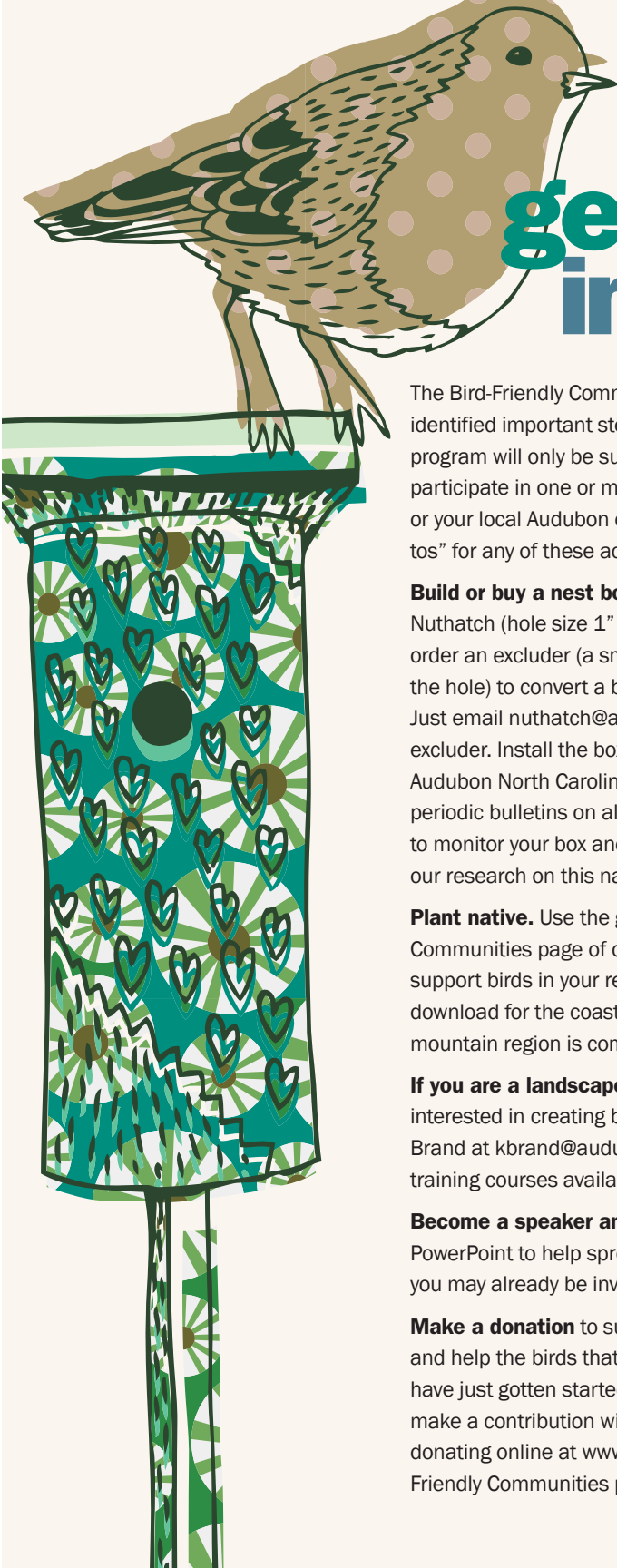


Chicago demonstrated an 80 percent reduction in collisions when building lights were turned out, and it is good for birds in North Carolina that Audubon volunteers in three of our largest cities are asking building owners and managers to turn lights out, as well as collecting the dead birds that make a strong case for doing so. Each building dimmed, added up across the country, could add up to saving quite a few birds.”

– John Gerwin, Research Curator of Ornithology, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences

The bird collection at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences is one of the three largest of its kind in the southeastern United States, housing 200,000 specimens. Through Lights Out monitoring efforts, Audubon NC chapters have contributed more than 200 specimens to this collection. These valuable specimens, which include some rarities like Connecticut Warbler and Black-billed Cuckoo, are now permanent sources of data for students and professional researchers to use in their studies.

www.naturalsciences.org



getting involved

The Bird-Friendly Communities Implementation team has identified important steps to take to help urban birds. But the program will only be successful if North Carolina citizens participate in one or more of these actions. Visit our website or your local Audubon chapter to learn more about the “how tos” for any of these activities.

Build or buy a nest box appropriate for a Brown-headed Nuthatch (hole size 1” or 1 1/8” in diameter). You can also order an excluder (a small metal plate that reduces the size of the hole) to convert a bluebird house into a nuthatch house. Just email nuthatch@audubon.org to ask for your free excluder. Install the box following instructions found on the Audubon North Carolina website, then sign up to receive periodic bulletins on all things nuthatch. You can also sign up to monitor your box and report successful hatchings to help in our research on this native southern bird.

Plant native. Use the guides found on the Bird-Friendly Communities page of our website to see which native plants support birds in your region. Brochures are available for download for the coastal and piedmont regions, and the mountain region is coming soon.

If you are a landscape architect or a building architect interested in creating bird-friendly environments, contact Kim Brand at kbrand@audubon.org to learn more about the training courses available for you.

Become a speaker and presenter of the Bird-Friendly PowerPoint to help spread the word to clubs and organizations you may already be involved with. Contact Kim to get started.

Make a donation to support the expansion of this program and help the birds that share our cities and towns with us. We have just gotten started and have lots more to do! You can make a contribution with the enclosed envelope, or by donating online at www.ncaudubon.org. Select the Bird-Friendly Communities page to support this program.

[MEET THE BIRD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES TEAM]

Curtis Smalling, Director of Land Bird Conservation

“The most successful conservation is always based on partners coming together to do what is best for birds, wildlife, and the people who care about them. Audubon North Carolina’s Bird-Friendly Communities program is built on that strength. We can accomplish great things, have broad-scale



impact and work more quickly and effectively through working together, learning what others are already doing, and by being very deliberate in identifying the audiences, barriers, and opportunities for conservation. Our Bird-Friendly Communities project is a great example of this approach and we are off to a great start in protecting our urban-dwelling birds. “

A self-proclaimed bird-nerd since childhood, Curtis has been sharing his passion for bird conservation for years. He began his career with Audubon in 2001 conducting surveys for Golden-winged Warblers in western North Carolina. He serves on many regional and international committees committed to bird research and conservation and currently directs ANC’s Important Bird Areas program, the Land Bird Conservation program and the Bird-Friendly Communities program. Curtis is especially excited about the Bird-Friendly Communities program because he believes that if the hundreds of everyday decisions a citizen makes about yard care were made with birds and wildlife in mind the positive impact on birds, and people, would be phenomenal.

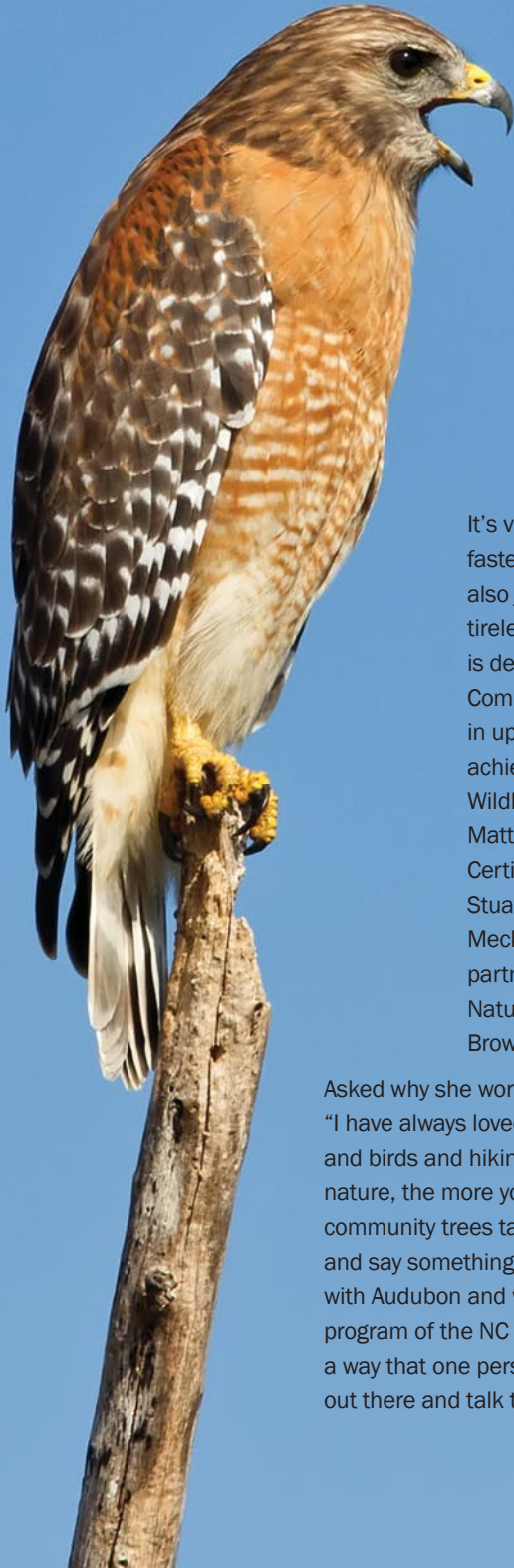
Kim Brand, Bird-Friendly Communities Project Coordinator

“Coordinating the Bird-Friendly Communities effort for Audubon North Carolina is very satisfying work for me. I love to pull people together, find out what everyone cares most about, and figure out how to make things happen to accomplish those shared goals. That’s what we began doing a year ago when we launched Bird-Friendly Communities. Every day I get to collaborate with people all



across our beautiful state who are extraordinarily smart, dedicated, and passionate about birds and conservation. And Bird-Friendly Communities is all about empowering people – whether they watch birds in their backyard, or design the landscaping for corporate campuses, or manage an office building – to make choices that help birds. I feel like I’m helping to make a difference in North Carolina and along the Atlantic Flyway. My ultimate hope is that our efforts will make North Carolina an even nicer place for people to live too.”

Kim, an ornithologist who studied the Florida Scrub-Jay for her masters’ thesis, was named Audubon North Carolina Volunteer of the Year in May 2013. She has been a board member of Forsyth Audubon since 2008 and helped launch Lights Out Winston-Salem in 2011. As a volunteer she helped start the Bird-Friendly Communities implementation team a year ago, and with funding from Toyota TogetherGreen, joined the Audubon staff in November 2013.



It's very fortunate for birds that our largest and fastest-growing metropolitan area – Charlotte – also just happens to be the home of Jill Palmer. A tireless advocate for birds, wildlife and habitat, Jill is dedicated to the goals of Bird-Friendly Communities. She launched a Lights Out program in uptown Charlotte in 2012. She led the effort to achieve the NC Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat Certification for the Town of Matthews, where she shares a home – and a Certified Backyard Wildlife Habitat – with Will Stuart and their dog Murphy. As president of Mecklenburg Audubon Society, she has mobilized partners including Mecklenburg County Division of Natural Resources to put up more than 350 Brown-headed Nuthatch boxes.

Asked why she works so hard to help birds and habitat, Jill says, "I have always loved being outside. I've always been into plants and birds and hiking. The more you learn about birds and nature, the more you look around and see forests destroyed and community trees taken down. Somebody has got to speak up and say something. In the past 7 years since I became involved with Audubon and with Habitat and Wildlife Keepers (HAWK, a program of the NC Wildlife Federation), I've learned that there is a way that one person can make a difference. You really can go out there and talk to people and make that difference."



Audubon CARDINAL CLUB

Monthly giving is simple. Your credit card will be charged once per month. Each January we will send you a tax receipt – and a big thank you – for your giving over the previous year. You may change or cancel your gift or skip a month whenever you like.

To sign up, go to www.ncaudubon.org and click the link under the cardinal on the home page. Remember to select North Carolina from the drop down menu to put your dollars to work in our state.

With a century of conservation history in North Carolina, Audubon strives to conserve and restore the habitats we share with all wildlife, focusing on the needs of birds. Audubon North Carolina achieves its mission through a blend of science-based research and conservation, education and outreach, and advocacy.

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Audubon North Carolina Chapters

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www.forsythaudubon.org

Cape Fear Audubon Society

www.capefearaudubon.org

Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society

www.emasnc.org

Great Smoky Mountains Audubon Society

www.gsmas.com

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www.newhopeaudubon.org

T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society

www.tgpearsonaudubon.org

Wake Audubon Society

www.wakeaudubon.org

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Bird-Friendly Building Design

Many bird collisions with windows occur during daytime hours too as birds become confused by reflections that, to them, appear as the objects reflected – trees, shrubs and sky. Audubon is addressing daytime collisions by training architects with a continuing education course designed by the American Bird Conservancy on Bird Collision Deterrence. This training counts towards Pilot Credit #55 in the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) design certification.

Nest Boxes for Nuthatches

With fewer dead trees available because of development and fire suppression, cavity-nesting birds are having a hard time finding enough places to build their nests. Putting up nest boxes provides nesting sites for them. Similar to the very successful recovery of the Eastern Bluebird through nest box placement and bluebird trails, research by Dr. Mark Stanback of Davidson College has shown that Brown-headed Nuthatches can also benefit from putting up nest boxes. Our Lookin' for a Good Home campaign aims to have citizens install 10,000 nest boxes by 2015. With 14 percent of the world's population residing in North Carolina, the Brown-headed Nuthatch is one of our responsibility species. On the Audubon North Carolina website (www.ncaudubon.org) you can find directions for building a nuthatch nest box or converting a bluebird house to a nuthatch house, and you can sign up to receive bulletins about all things nuthatch, including how to participate in research through monitoring the nests while babies are being born.

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: Brown-headed Nuthatches by David Blevins; Page 3: Unloading nest boxes by Curtis Smalling; Page 5: Chimney Swift; Pages 6-7: American Goldfinch; Page 8: Eastern Bluebirds, Frank Newell by Gerry Luginbuhl; Page 9: Scott Anderson by Lena Gallitano, Brown-headed Nuthatch by Mary Sonis; Page 10: Wood Thrush; Page 12: Curtis Smalling by Michelle Frazier, Jim Brand by Curtis Smalling; Page 13: Red-shouldered Hawk, Jill Palmer by Will Stuart; Page 15: Gray Catbird by Will Stuart; Back cover: Chimney Swifts by Donald Mullaney

Plant Native for Birds

About 80% of plants in urban and suburban areas are not native. Although often beautiful, non-



native plants are a food desert for birds. Why? Insects. Virtually all land bird babies must have high-protein insect food to eat. But non-native plants do not support native insects that are needed as “baby food” for most of our bird species. For example, entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that oak trees – a North American native tree – host more than 500 different kinds of caterpillars while ginkgo trees – a non-native – host only 5. Audubon is focusing on encouraging large-scale users of plants, such as municipalities, landscape architects and city planners, to choose native plants for big installations. And we are providing citizens with lists of native plants that support birds for each region of our state. You can get your Plant Native for Birds guide (and additional resources) on our website.

Find us online today!

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