



Audubon NORTH CAROLINA

Audubon supporters are familiar with the Important Bird Area (IBA) program, which provides a blueprint for our policy, advocacy, education, and outreach actions. But what do Important Bird Areas mean in practice for Audubon North Carolina and for the members and volunteers who support our conservation work?

To answer this question it's helpful to consider the scope of the landscape in which Audubon North Carolina works. Our state's diverse habitats support an equally diverse assemblage of birds: From the spruce-fir forests of the Southern Appalachian Mountains to the barrier islands and ocean waters along the coast, more than 450 bird species have been recorded in North Carolina, nearly 200 of which are known to breed here. Audubon North Carolina, along with our partners, has identified 96 IBAs in North Carolina that are vitally important to bird species that breed, winter, or migrate through our state.

But IBAs are not just important for birds; they are critical for people as well. These special landscapes provide clean drinking water, as in the case of the Jordan Lake and Falls Lake IBAs. They are home to thriving populations of other species, such as the Great Dismal Swamp, where black bears and bobcats find plenty of room to roam. And IBAs provide unique opportunities for people to connect to nature, such as state parks like Pilot Mountain and Grandfather Mountain



iba
of the month

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Audubon North Carolina

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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[FROM THE DIRECTOR]

HEATHER STARCK

Executive Director

Audubon North Carolina



North Carolina's Cape Hatteras National Seashore has become a symbol for the tensions that often swirl around public lands. Conservation agencies like the National Park Service, which manages Cape Hatteras, face a daily challenge in striking a balance between protecting wildlife and providing recreational opportunities for visitors.

As a supporter you know that Audubon, Defenders of Wildlife, and Southern Environmental Law Center have spent many years defending the birds and wildlife that rely on Cape Hatteras for their survival. Some off-road vehicle enthusiasts who live near and/or recreate in the national seashore are opposed to the Park Service's efforts to implement a vehicle management plan. We know that the management of Cape Hatteras has become a deeply emotional issue for many people. We respect the pride with which residents and visitors regard this place that has become intertwined with their lives.

We also recognize that as the United States' first National Seashore, Cape Hatteras needs to be managed in a manner that protects its irreplaceable wildlife and habitats and provides a safe place for all visitors, the majority of whom do not drive on the beach.

I urge you to take a few steps to help us build a sustainable future at Cape Hatteras. You can read the latest update on this issue on pages 10 and 11. Some people have propagated misinformation about Audubon's work at Cape Hatteras, including claims that we want to ban vehicles from the Seashore and that the Seashore's beaches are closed to all visitors. These rumors are untrue. To learn more about these mistruths and the facts behind them please visit www.nps.gov/caha and the FAQ section at www.preservehatteras.org.

Two bills have been introduced into the U.S. House and Senate that threaten to overturn the Park Service's balanced management plan at the Seashore. If the legislation passes it would set a dangerous precedent for all national parks. If you haven't already, please join the 30,000 other conservation advocates who have taken action on this issue by visiting www.audubonaction.org/hatteras.

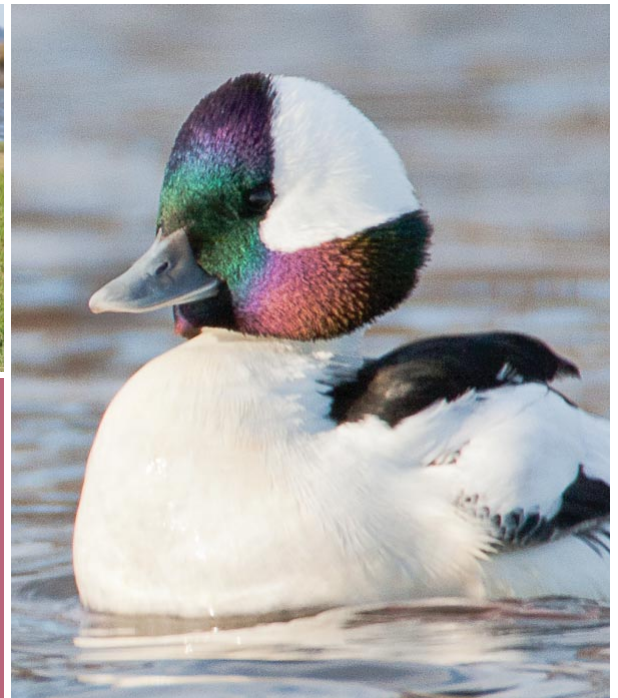
We recognize that the new management plan at the Seashore has changed the way some visitors experience the national park and we thank them for making a personal sacrifice to help this globally significant ecosystem persist for many generations to come. Thank you for your continued support.

We are sad to report the loss of Charlton "Charlie" Davis, a dear friend of Audubon North Carolina who died on April 16, 2012 in Atlanta, Georgia. Charlie and his wife Pat have been long time supporters of Audubon. Charlie formed an accounting firm that served much of the Valdosta, Georgia area for over 20 years, as well as acquiring and running the Credit Bureau of Valdosta. In 1994, Charlie and Pat purchased a home in Highlands, North Carolina and pursued their interests in nature through National Audubon Society. Charlie served on the board of Audubon North Carolina from 2006 to 2010. Charlie's wonderful sense of humor, astute observations, business acumen, and charm were great assets to Audubon. We will sorely miss him. The family has asked that memorial gifts be made to Audubon North Carolina, 400 Silver Cedar Court, Suite 240, Chapel Hill, NC 27514 or to the Alapaha Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, P.O. Box 1006, Valdosta, GA 31603.

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pine island update



Making headway to open Pine Island to the public

In January 2012, Pine Island received approval from National Audubon Society's Board of Directors to move forward with the next steps in developing Audubon North Carolina's first center. Audubon's efforts to engage people in our conservation efforts will be greatly enhanced through activities and programs at Pine Island. Pine Island will be a place where people can immerse themselves in conservation experiences unlike those found anywhere in the region. Visitors will be able to access the natural splendor of the Sanctuary through a network of interpretive trails and boardwalks. Soon, Pine Island staff will hire an architect who will complete a site design to support our education and conservation initiatives.

Chapters invited to visit Pine Island

Audubon Chapters in North Carolina are invited for a "sneak peek" of the Pine Island Sanctuary and Audubon Center on the northern Outer Banks. Although Pine Island is not fully operational for the general public, chapters are welcome to organize group outings in order to experience this beautiful sanctuary that embraces the natural heritage of northeastern North Carolina. With almost 3,000 acres of marsh and maritime forest adjacent to Currituck Sound, Pine Island provides a great place for birding or just experiencing nature.

This past winter, two Audubon Chapters (Cape Fear and Forsyth) visited Pine Island and toured some of the Important Bird Areas located in the northeastern part of the state. Each group spotted more than 80 species of birds and enjoyed special access to some refuges or sanctuaries. Please contact Pine Island's Director, Mark Buckler, for more information, at mbuckler@audubon.org or 252.453.0603.

Programs at Pine Island

One of the best ways to explore Audubon's Pine Island Sanctuary is by water. This spring and summer you can join a kayak trip through the marshes of the Pine Island Sanctuary and learn about the natural history of this breathtaking landscape. Miles of secluded water trails make this arguably the most intricate marsh maze on the Outer Banks. Tours will be offered by Coastal Kayak from April 1 through early September.

The tour starts with a 10 minute walk down the Audubon trail to the kayaks. From here your guide will lead you into the maze of islands through which only he or she knows the way. Tours depart from the Pine Island Racquet Club in the mornings and a few hours before sunset. The 3 hour tours cost \$50 per adult and \$25 per child.

Please contact Coastal Kayak to make your reservation by visiting outerbankskayaktours.com/kayak-tours or by calling 252-261-6262 or 252-441-3393.

Pine Island will also offer a weekly nature tour during the summer months. Please see the back page of the newsletter for more information.





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where rangers offer programs and outings for visitors. As well, local communities, civic groups, Audubon chapters, and school groups have adopted IBAs as their own special places to steward, where they can recharge in nature.

Almost every conservation planning entity in North Carolina recognizes IBAs as priority sites for long-term protection, but the general public is probably not familiar with the term IBA. For Audubon North Carolina to be successful, we need to elevate the profile of IBAs and help people understand why they matter to birds, wildlife, and people.



IBA of the Month effort

This year, Audubon North Carolina has launched an IBA of the Month marketing initiative designed to bring these special places to life. Primarily online-based, the monthly campaign includes a feature story about the IBA on www.ncaudubon.org, frequent posts on our blog (www.ncaudubonblog.org), and updates on

Facebook and Twitter. (To sign up for our Facebook or Twitter accounts please visit www.ncaudubon.org and click on the links on the bottom left of the home page.) Our blog houses virtual tours of every IBA with information that is constantly updated by Audubon's national IBA database.

"As the IBA Coordinator, I think this new platform for communicating with the public about our IBAs will build a foundation for creative and meaningful things to come," says Curtis Smalling. "I see a time when our Adopt an IBA groups, partners, and others help us tell the stories that will inspire folks to take action for these great places. Please share your stories of these IBAs with us, whether through written blogs, video clips, Facebook posts, or tweets. We love these places and need to let others know how great they are."

Below are excerpts from our first IBA of the month features. You can read the full write-ups at www.ncaudubon.org in the Birds & Wildlife section.

Pungo-Pocosin Lakes Important Bird Area

A wintertime visit to the Pungo-Pocosin Lakes IBA is a magical experience, as you explore vast open spaces and cypress-ringed lakes filled with birds and wildlife. The air is filled with the calls of thousands of Tundra Swans and Snow Geese. Located in Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington Counties, this IBA includes two large natural lakes, Phelps and Pungo, extensive agricultural lands, and forests, which

provide habitat for a wide variety of birds. The site encompasses Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Pettigrew State Park, including Lake Phelps, and private farmland west of these two lakes.

80,000 to 110,000 waterfowl congregate here during an average winter, including North Carolina's largest wintering concentration of Snow Geese and one of the largest concentrations of Tundra Swans in the state. Tundra Swans breed in Alaska and western Canada and according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, approximately 70 – 80% of the eastern population of Tundra Swans winter in eastern North Carolina. Common Mergansers winter on Lake Phelps. The fields west of Lake Phelps have a good wintering population of Short-eared Owl; sometimes 5 to 10 have been reported.

During the spring and summer pocosin habitat is home to species such as Worm-eating Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, and other landbirds. The site has one of the state's highest counts for Northern Harrier during Christmas Bird Counts and Bald Eagles are also seen here during the winter. This IBA is home to large mammals that need extensive habitat, including red wolves, black bears, and bobcats.

Audubon NC's conservation work in the IBA

Audubon North Carolina and a variety of partners worked diligently to protect this IBA from the ill-conceived Navy Outlying

Audubon NC keeps eye on proposed wind farm

Many of our allies in the OLF battle are justifiably concerned about the proposed Pantego Wind Farm that would be located adjacent to and partially within the Pungo-Pocosin Lakes IBA. Audubon is deeply engaged in this project and is working with local advocates, USFWS and other agency representatives, and the wind developer to insure that birds are considered as this project moves forward for its various approvals and permits. The North Carolina Utilities Commission has granted the project a conditional Certificate for Public Convenience and Necessity. The conditions for this permit included language that Audubon NC and others requested, including the creation of a bird and bat conservation plan and mitigation plans completed in consultation with the USFWS prior to final approval from the Commission. Many other concerns exist about this project including the impact on Bald Eagles, wetlands, bats, and other factors. Audubon staff and other advocates will remain engaged and vigilant in our efforts to protect this special IBA. Keep up to date at our blog – www.ncaudubonblog.org.

Landing Field, which was ultimately moved to a different location. Audubon and partners are currently working to protect the IBA from adverse effects of potential wind energy development (see sidebar). Other threats to this vast site include invasive species (*Phragmites*), groundwater extraction, drought, drainage, disturbance to birds, and global climate change impacts.



Amphibolite Mountains Important Bird Area

Tucked away in the northwestern corner of the state near Boone and the Tennessee line is a mountain range with an unusual name and a stunning landscape that attracts birders, hikers, and mountain lovers. A mineral-rich rock type called amphibolite gneiss underpins the peaks in the Amphibolite Mountains, yielding a more neutral soil than typically found in the mountains and feeding a rich diversity of plant life. The Amphibolites average about 5,000 feet,

with 5,566-foot Snake Mountain reaching the highest elevation. The mountain range is oriented in a generally northeast to southwest direction and separates the north and south forks of the New River (another IBA, and one of the oldest rivers in the world).

Over 90 percent of this IBA is privately owned. The site includes Mt. Jefferson State Natural Area, Elk Knob State Park, and tracts on Paddy and Bluff Mountains protected by The Nature Conservancy. The North Carolina Plant Conservation Network also has significant holdings in the range. The landscape is a mosaic of farmland and hardwood forest interspersed with creeks, bogs, spruce forest, and grassy balds at higher elevations. These diverse habitats are home to mammals such as black bear and bobcat and rare creatures such as the bog turtle and northern flying squirrel.

This site supports significant populations of neotropical migrant songbirds, species of conservation concern, and Watchlist species, including the state's largest concentration of Vesper Sparrows. A remnant stand of spruce forest is home to Northern Saw-whet Owl, Magnolia Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Golden-crowned Kinglet and is an excellent example of this habitat type. This site was recently recognized as a Globally Significant IBA for Golden-winged Warblers.



The main threats to the Amphibolites are water quality, logging, residential and commercial development on private lands, and loss of early-successional habitats. Audubon NC is working with landowners in the Amphibolites to help them manage their property to benefit birds like the Golden-winged Warbler. For more information, see p 8.

How can I help protect North Carolina's IBAs?

- Make a gift to Audubon North Carolina. Visit www.ncaudubon.org and click on the Donate button on the top right of the home page.
- If you or your service group would like to adopt an IBA, contact Curtis Smalling, Coordinator, NC IBA Program and Mountain Program Manager, at csmalling@audubon.org, 828.265.0198.

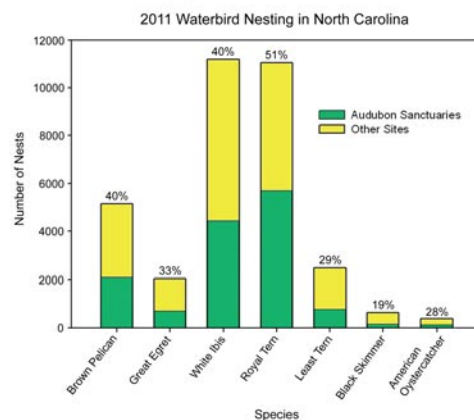
coastal update

2011 North Carolina waterbird census results will inform future management

Since 1977, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC), along with hardy volunteers and partner organizations like Audubon North Carolina, has regularly censused North Carolina's nesting waterbirds—herons and egrets, ibis, terns and skimmers, and other shorebirds. This project detects trends in regional populations, aids in management decisions, and directs future research questions.

In 2011, over 15 people combed Audubon sanctuaries from Oregon Inlet to the Cape Fear River as part of the waterbird census. Biologists and volunteers recorded 25 species at all the sites statewide and found 71,036 nests at 134 sites. Sites managed or owned by Audubon hosted 25,411 of those nests, or 37% of the state's nesting waterbirds. Coastal sanctuaries host significant percentages of some of the state's most well-known species, a sampling of which can be seen in the graph (above).

The census showed that some species, such as the Common Tern, Glossy Ibis, and Royal Tern, are decreasing, and WRC staff are working to determine the causes of these declines and what management decisions can be made to help increase their numbers. Other species, like the Brown Pelican and Least Tern, saw positive gains, increasing by 49% and 36% from 2007 numbers. By providing suitable nesting habitat and low levels of disturbance, Audubon sanctuaries contribute to the health of waterbird populations across the state.



Percentage of each species' NC population that nests on Audubon sanctuaries.

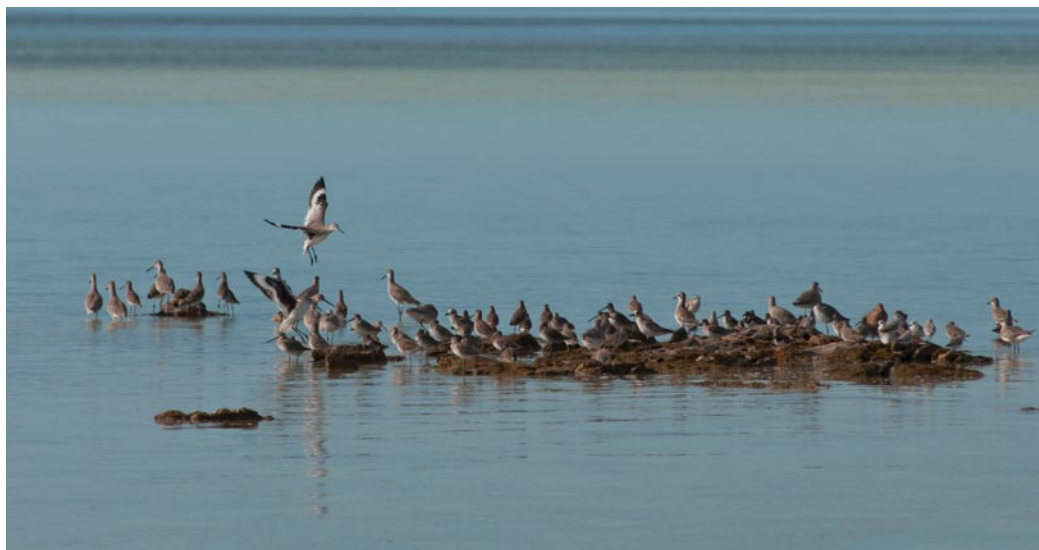
Study examines growth rate of American Oystercatcher chicks

For nesting birds, ultimate success is measured in the number of chicks fledged. Researchers have found that American

Oystercatchers that nest on barrier islands and other natural islands successfully fledge a higher percentage of chicks than those nesting on artificially created dredge spoil islands.

Although the reasons for this are not known, natural islands do offer more habitats where birds can forage. Oystercatcher chicks that can't fly yet will walk with their parents to feed in these areas on natural islands and potentially have access to more food, allowing them to grow faster. Oystercatchers on dredge islands must fly back and forth to take food to their unfledged chicks, perhaps limiting the amount of food their chicks receive. A study in Europe found no difference between young Eurasian Oystercatcher chicks with small appetites, but older chicks with bigger appetites did not grow as quickly on dredge islands as their counterparts in natural areas.





To find out if this might be happening in the New World, Jessica Stocking, a master's student at N.C. State University, conducted a chick growth rate study. "The birds have to work harder to procure food for themselves and their young, which involves an extra energetic cost," she explains. "We suspected that the cost would be expressed in the growth of the chicks."

As part of the study, Audubon North Carolina staff collected growth data from over 40 chicks on dredge and natural islands on the Cape Fear River and at Ocracoke and Oregon Inlets by catching the chicks and taking four measurements. Because their hatch dates were known, their growth rates could be compared to other chicks of the same age.

When she analyzed the data collected by Audubon biologists, as well as by National Park Service staff on Cape Lookout and Cape Hatteras National Seashores, Jessica found that there was no significant difference between chick growth rates on barrier islands and on dredge islands. While the results are not what Jessica hypothesized she would find, they illustrate two different reproductive strategies. On barrier islands, fewer eggs hatch, but once hatched, successful nests fledged nearly twice as many chicks as successful nests on dredge islands. "So far," says Jessica, "this

has been a successful population-level strategy, because more pairs are successfully hatching chicks on dredge islands, which compensates for lower fledging rates."

Research provides insights into wintering Piping Plovers

Last year, the first effort to survey all of The Bahamas for wintering Piping Plovers recorded 1,077 Piping Plovers at 176 sites on 14 islands. However, some sites were so large and remote that complete surveys were not possible, so to confirm the 2011 results and survey the entirety of extensive flats on Andros Island and the Berry Islands, a small team, including Walker Golder of Audubon North Carolina and Matt Jeffery of Audubon's International Alliances Program, returned to The Bahamas in February 2012.

Their trip recorded 449 Piping Plovers on Andros, or 6% of the global population and 13% of the Atlantic coast breeding population. In the Berrys, they found 259 plovers, or 3% of the global population and 7% of the Atlantic breeders. These results confirm the importance of the areas to the Piping Plover. In addition to the plovers, the biologists recorded other species such as Red Knots, Short-billed Dowitchers, and Black-bellied Plovers. With this data, the Bahamas National Trust, a non-

governmental organization created by the Bahamian parliament to manage the country's national park system, can request permanent protection for these sites, ensuring they will be safe from development, sand mining, and other threats.

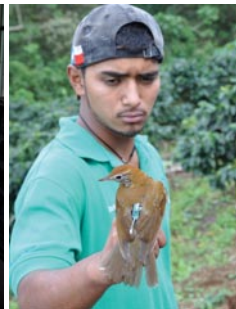
Volunteers make a difference for beach-nesting birds

The arrival of spring ushered in nesting season for North Carolina's waterbirds. Throughout the month of March, Audubon staff and volunteers posted coastal sanctuaries around the state. Last year, over 50 volunteers helped to make the postings possible. This year volunteers from GE, UNC-Wilmington, and the Cape Fear Audubon Society again assisted Audubon staff with posting signs at the sanctuaries.

Visitors to Mason Inlet Waterbird Management Area at Wrightsville Beach will also be greeted with a new educational kiosk. You can "be a good egg" and help nesting birds by respecting their nesting areas, keeping your dog on a leash and away from birds, and sharing your enjoyment of the birds with others.

Learn more about sharing the beach with birds and take our pledge at www.goodeggnc.org.

— Lindsay Addison, Coastal Biologist



Bird landowner partnership underway

As we mentioned in the Fall/Winter 2011 newsletter, we are initiating a major push to get bird-friendly management guidance and

assistance into the hands of private landowners and public lands managers across the region. Thanks to funding from TogetherGreen, the Grace Jones Richardson Trust, the National Science Foundation, and other private sources we are making headway towards our acreage goals for implementing conservation management plans for forest, shrubland, and grassland habitats. Working with the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, and a variety of local and regional land trusts, we have provided bird friendly recommendations for landowners and managers in five of our top priority IBAs.

We received great news about our work to protect Golden-winged Warblers: the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior have announced a new Working Lands Initiative that will benefit seven species across the country including the Golden-winged Warbler. Audubon is working closely with Natural Resources Conservation Services staff to assist landowners in using Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) funds to aid this species. And in even better news, the project is focusing on lands within focal areas we helped develop through the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group, and lands within our priority IBAs for Golden-wings are given more points in the evaluation process.

If you have forest land, shrubland, or grassland that you would like to manage better for birds (even if that is not your top priority for working lands) let us know by contacting Curtis Smalling, whose information is at the end of this article. If you are actively engaged with a

land trust or other conservation organization that wants to incorporate bird friendly management practices into their work, please let us know. Together we can make a difference for birds in all of our habitats.

Nicaragua update

I recently ventured to Nicaragua with a dozen Audubon supporters and Dave Davenport of EcoQuest Travel (one of our business sponsors). We had a great trip and were able to visit our partners and learn about the work Audubon North Carolina has been supporting in the country. We were delighted to have Diane Allison join us on the trip; Diane tracked down the Wood Thrush in Pennsylvania that had been banded in Nicaragua last year (see the Fall/Winter 2011 newsletter for more details). Diane and the rest of the group were able to see Wood Thrushes on their wintering grounds and even had the chance to observe our partners outfit birds with geolocators to track where the birds spend the summer. We saw over 200 species on our ten day adventure.

We also supported a workshop to train Nicaraguan birders and researchers in using the newly established portal for entering Nicaraguan bird sighting records into eBird. Last year high school intern Julia Roberts helped create the filter for evaluating records for the country. Nicaragua was the only country in Central America that did not have the ability to upload records and we are happy to report that since it launched, over 1,200 checklists have already been reviewed and uploaded. Many thanks to everyone that was involved in developing this important repository.

— *Curtis Smalling, Coordinator, NC IBA Program and Mountain Program Manager,*
csmalling@audubon.org, 828.265.0198



Volunteers Needed

The mountain program has a variety of volunteer needs for both field work and office work. If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Curtis Smalling at csmalling@audubon.org or 828.265.0198.

- We have lots of opportunities to learn more about how birds respond to management activities. We continue to study how Golden-winged Warblers use shrubland habitats and how birds, butterflies, and plants will respond to a conversion to native warm season grasses and pollinator plants on the Blue Ridge Parkway. And we are working with landowners and managers to make management recommendations on many privately-owned parcels. These efforts also include invasive plant control and other activities at selected parcels.
- If species surveys are more your cup of tea, then you can help with a variety of projects including Golden-winged Warbler surveys, nightjar routes, Peregrine Falcon monitoring, general bird surveys in priority areas, and other species-specific projects.
- We have more indoors-oriented projects as well, including data entry and photo entry into our online image database.

National Park Service issues rules for responsible beach driving at Cape Hatteras; legislation threatens to derail progress

The National Park Service (NPS) has made tremendous strides towards implementing science-based management at Cape Hatteras National Seashore since our last update in the Fall/Winter 2011 newsletter, but misguided legislation now threatens this progress.



After an extensive public comment period, NPS released a final management plan for Cape Hatteras National Seashore in January 2012 that provides protections for both pedestrians and wildlife while still allowing responsible beach driving. The majority of comments submitted supported the NPS plan or implementing even stricter management on beach driving at the Seashore.

“Under the reasonable, science-based management of the past few years, beach-nesting birds and sea turtles are rebounding at Cape Hatteras National Seashore and visitors continue to flock to this national treasure,” said Heather Starck, executive director of Audubon North Carolina. “The new rules appear to give the National Park Service the guidance to protect and manage the natural resources while allowing for responsible ORV (off-road vehicle) use.”

The park service’s new rules allow ORV use on the majority of the seashore. Twenty-eight of the seashore’s 67 miles are set aside as year-round ORV routes, with only 26 miles designated as year-round vehicle-free areas for pedestrians, families, and wildlife. The remaining 13 miles of seashore are seasonally open to ORVs. The plan also proposes new parking facilities, ORV ramps, and water shuttles to increase visitor access to beaches.

“The park service’s rules are a compromise that provides protections for both pedestrians and wildlife while still allowing responsible beach driving,” said Julie Youngman, senior attorney, Southern Environmental Law Center.

The long-awaited rules are the final step in a process agreed to by all parties concerned about beach driving in the national seashore. In 2007, Audubon North Carolina, Defenders of Wildlife, and Southern Environmental Law Center turned to the courts for help in getting the NPS to implement long overdue safeguards for pedestrians and beach-nesting wildlife on park beaches overrun by off-road vehicles.

With temporary beach driving rules implemented in April 2008, beach-nesting birds and sea turtles within the national seashore showed signs of recovery after reaching alarming lows under unmanaged beach driving. Only 44 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2004, but a record-breaking 153 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2010 and 147 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2011. No Piping Plover chicks survived to fledge (learn to fly) in 2002 and 2004, but 15 chicks fledged in 2010 and 10 fledged in 2011.

After an alarmingly low number of tern and skimmer nests in 2007, Black Skimmers had 99 nests in 2011, Least Terns continued to rebound with a near record-breaking 1,048 nests, Common Terns nested in the greatest numbers since 2004, and Gull-billed Terns returned to nest after being absent since 2005.

Tourism flourished in Dare County during the period when interim protections were in place. Rental occupancy receipts in Dare County increased by millions over the previous decade as recorded by the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau. Park visitation and gross occupancy in Dare County during peak breeding and nesting season under interim management held steady or increased compared to the three preceding years. According to a state report on tourism for 2009-2010, Dare County experienced an 8.8 percent growth in tourism—making it among the top growth counties in the state during a recession.

As a unit of the National Park System, Cape Hatteras National Seashore has been required under federal law since 1972 to establish guidelines that minimize harm from the use of off-road vehicles to the natural resources of the seashore in accordance with the best available science for present and future generations. The new rules bring the NPS into compliance with that requirement. Most national seashores either have regulations in place to manage and restrict ORV use or do not allow ORV use at all.



Beach-driving bills could undermine progress at the Seashore

In early 2012, U.S. Representative Walter Jones and U.S. Senators Richard Burr and Kay Hagan introduced legislation aimed at overturning the National Park Service's balanced, science-based rules. The bills would abolish the plan and allow unmanaged ORV use throughout the entire park. Audubon and its partners are asking their supporters to help them stop these bad beach-driving bills in their tracks. The legislation would undermine the great comeback birds and wildlife are making at Cape Hatteras and set a dangerous precedent for weakening vehicle management at other national parks.

2.5 million people visit Cape Hatteras National Seashore every year to enjoy walking, fishing, birding, and picnicking on the Seashore's beautiful beaches. Just a small minority of these visitors drives off-road vehicles on the beach.

The bills ignore the sound science and majority of public comments supporting better management of off-road vehicles at the Seashore. You can help us stop this legislation and protect the wild beauty and wildlife of one of America's premier national parks. As of early April, close to 30,000 people had taken action on behalf of the birds, wildlife, and pedestrians at Cape Hatteras. If you haven't taken action already, please visit www.audubonaction.org/hatteras.

For more information about Audubon's conservation work at Cape Hatteras, visit www.preservehatteras.org.

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Lights Out

program is for the birds

Bird's-eye View, by Phil Dickinson

Originally published in the Winston-Salem Journal, April 6, 2012

Spring bird migration has started. In the next few weeks, millions, perhaps billions, of birds will be moving north along the Atlantic Flyway and other migratory corridors. One of their biggest obstacles are well-lighted city skylines. Chicago, New York and other major cities are turning off lights to protect the birds – and saving money in the process. Lights Out Winston-Salem is encouraging building owners and managers to do the same.

Collisions with building glass account for as many as a billion dead birds each year. Most of these are migratory birds that fly to their northern breeding grounds in the spring and return south in the fall. Among human-related causes of bird fatalities, building collisions are exceeded only by loss of habitat.

What causes these collisions? Migrating birds rely on the moon and stars for navigation. Lighting on top of tall buildings, floodlights pointed skyward and interior lights overwhelm these visual cues. The birds become disoriented. Fog and low clouds make the situation worse. Not all deaths or injuries occur from night strikes. Many of the birds land and in daylight are drawn into glass windows by reflections of trees and sky or atrium plantings.

Birds that spend a lot of time on or close to the ground seem more susceptible to collisions than others. These include hermit thrushes, small warblers called ovenbirds and common yellowthroats, American woodcocks and our common winter resident the white-throated sparrow.

Chicago was the first U.S. city to turn out lights during migration. Today, about 100 buildings have their lights turned off after 11 p.m. The program seems to work. At Chicago's sprawling McCormick Place, a two-year study showed an 83 percent decrease in bird fatalities. Building owners and managers are also saving energy costs. For example, Toronto's Metro Hall estimates \$200,000 in annual savings under their "Fatal Light Awareness Program."

In 1997, Rebekah Creshkoff started monitoring bird kills at the World Trade Center in New York City. In 2000, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey voluntarily installed netting over lower-level windows to reduce reflections and bird fatalities. Five years later, New York City Audubon partnered with the Building Owners and Managers Association and the Department of Parks and Recreation to begin a Lights Out program. At least three dozen properties now take part.

In Winston-Salem, our buildings are not as tall or numerous. But at least 150 species migrate through our area along the Atlantic Flyway and collisions do occur. Allison Sloan worked with Creshkoff to collect data in New York between 1998 and 2004. Sloan now lives in Winston-Salem. Last fall, she and Kim Brand, a Forsyth Audubon member and ornithologist, organized volunteers to monitor bird collisions in the downtown area. During October, this group found 53 dead or injured birds. The actual mortality total was probably higher. Dead birds are collected under a federal permit and given to the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh.



Forsyth Audubon, in collaboration with Audubon North Carolina, has started Lights Out Winston-Salem. Volunteers started monitoring at 13 locations on March 15 and will continue through the end of migration in late May. Lights Out will also encourage local building owners and managers to reduce lighting after 11 p.m., pointing out the benefits and positive responses in other cities. This is the first program in the Southeast. Audubon envisions Lights Out all along the flyway.

Bird collisions occur at private homes, too. Here are steps American Bird Conservancy recommends: place feeders within three feet of the house to re-direct takeoff, close blinds or install window film, place multiple decals on windows, not just single hawk silhouettes, or dangle strips in front of them four inches apart.

If you find an injured bird, place it in a box or paper bag with air holes. Stunned birds often revive in a few minutes. For other injuries, Lights Out volunteers have been working with Animal Ark Veterinary Hospital in Clemmons, (336) 788-2738. Other local veterinarians or Wildlife Rehabilitation, (336) 785-0912, may also help.

For more information about Lights Out, go to www.forsythaudubon.org.

Bird's-Eye View is a joint column by Ron Morris and Phil Dickinson. If you have a birding question or story idea, write to Bird's-Eye View in care of Features, *Winston-Salem Journal*, P.O. Box 3159, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101-3159, or send an email to birding@wsjournal.com. Please type "birds" in the subject line.

Since this article went to press, owners of three buildings have agreed to participate in Lights Out Winston-Salem: the historic R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company headquarters, Reynolds American Plaza and Winston Tower.

Help birds migrate safely

At home

- Place bird feeders within 3 feet, or more than 30 feet, away from windows.
- Close blinds or curtains.
- Make windows visible to birds by applying vertical lines 4 inches apart or horizontal lines 2 inches apart to the outside of your windows. The lines can be Tempera paint, "Zen Curtains," or ABC Bird Tape. Visit www.birdsavers.com and www.abcbirdtape.org for more information.
- Visit the <http://athome.audubon.org> for more information about creating a safe haven for birds around your house.

At work

- Close blinds and turn off lights when you leave for the evening. Encourage co-workers to do the same.
- Ask your employer to turn out decorative lights and reduce interior lighting from 11 p.m. to dawn during migration. Download a sample request letter from the Forsyth Audubon website at www.forsythaudubon.org.

In your city

- Start a Lights Out program. Forsyth Audubon is ready to share training materials and advice. Contact Kim Brand, Lights Out Winston-Salem coordinator, at 336-391-9614 or lightsout@forsythaudubon.org for more information.
- Let your chapter leaders know you would like to help with early morning downtown building patrols.

In North Carolina

- Donate funds to promote Lights Out efforts in North Carolina and increase awareness of bird migration. Visit www.ncaudubon.org and click on the Donate button on the top right of the page.

Help protect North Carolina's birdlife today and in the future

Decades ago, when I began watching birds, it never occurred to me they would become such an important part of my life. In the 70s and 80s I watched birds in my backyard. In the 90s I joined a local Audubon chapter and found like-minded people who expanded my awareness of birds and bird protection. In the 2000s I got involved in projects that would directly help birds by participating in the Carolina Bird Club, helping bring the statewide N.C. Birding Trail to life, and by joining Audubon North Carolina's board of trustees. My love and appreciation of birds and what they represent has only grown through these activities. Last year I rode my bicycle 500 miles across the state as a fundraiser for bird conservation and I took a life-changing trip to Nicaragua that brought my appreciation and understanding to a hemispheric level.

Bequests are the most common form of gift planning and are an ideal way to continue your legacy after your lifetime. A bequest can be made for a specific amount or for a percentage of your residual estate. You must name your beneficiaries using proper, legal names.

Here is some sample legal bequest language you can use to leave a gift to Audubon North Carolina:

"I bequeath the sum of \$__ or __% of my residuary estate to National Audubon Society, Inc. a not-for-profit environmental conservation organization with its principal offices located at 225 Varick Street, 7th floor, New York, NY 10014, to be used for the support of its ongoing environmental conservation and education purposes conducted in the state of North Carolina."

To find out more, go to www.ncaudubon.org or call Karen Fernandez, Director of Development, at 919-929-3899 or email kfernandez@audubon.org.

not, and that is why I have made a planned gift in support of Audubon North Carolina.

Like me, perhaps you too, have spent decades appreciating North Carolina's birds and beautiful places. Won't you take a little time to include Audubon in your estate plans? Please take a few minutes to review the sidebar and if you have any questions don't hesitate to contact the dedicated, knowledgeable, and friendly staff of Audubon.

As a result of my gift, I am reassured by the knowledge that when I am no longer here to support Audubon's conservation efforts my planned gift will help ensure the work being done today will continue into the future. And I am reassured knowing that the birds will be here for others to enjoy.

P.S. Be sure to designate your gift to Audubon North Carolina to support work in our state!

– Lena Gallitano

I visited several Important Bird Areas during the Nicaragua trip. An IBA is a place that provides essential habitat for one or more species of birds where they breed, winter, and/or migrate. Over the last decade Audubon North Carolina has identified 96 IBAs comprising nearly 4.9 million acres in the state. The importance of identifying, managing, and protecting IBAs and the mystery of bird migration were never more tangible to me than during my time in Nicaragua. Watching Curtis Smalling, IBA Coordinator for Audubon North Carolina, holding a Golden-winged Warbler in his hands at a banding station was astounding. Was this tiny bird born in a North Carolina mountain IBA? Or the Wood Thrush he banded – could it be one of "our" Wood Thrushes from the Piedmont?

From my backyard to Nicaragua, it is encouraging to know that dedicated and skilled people are working to ensure safe passage and a secure homecoming for migratory birds while also providing havens for our resident species. But what we do today is not enough. Can you imagine a day when Golden-winged Warblers do not return to nest here and we no longer hear the melodic song of the Wood Thrush? I can

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Diane Allison honored with lifetime membership

In March 2012, the Board of Trustees of Audubon North Carolina passed a resolution making Diane Allison a lifetime honorary member of Audubon North Carolina. In the Fall/Winter 2011 Newsletter we described how a Wood Thrush that had been banded at El Jaguar Reserve in Nicaragua was later found in Pennsylvania, the victim of a window collision. According to the board resolution, Diane “exerted substantial efforts to track down the source of banding of a wood thrush found in her home area in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.”

In February 2012 Diane joined an Audubon NC trip to Nicaragua (described on p. 8) where she was able to meet Audubon’s partners at El Jaguar and learn more about their collaboration to protect neotropical migrants on their wintering and nesting grounds. The resolution stated that Diane “has benefitted Audubon North Carolina by advocating generally for birds, by aiding in understanding the migration patterns of the wood thrush, and by enhancing the experience of the Nicaragua trip for all participants.” Diane - Thank you and congratulations.

Funding update

- Audubon North Carolina was awarded a grant in the amount of \$2,500 from the Clabough Foundation for our Working Lands: Putting Lands to Work for Birds project in the mountain region. The funds will be used to produce materials that outline options available to landowners to enhance bird and wildlife habitat on property that falls within an IBA and supports a bird species of concern in North Carolina.
- Audubon North Carolina was named a sub-awardee of an NRCS grant through Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) in the amount of \$31,977. The grant is to conduct a range-wide assessment of Golden-winged Warbler habitat and population response to NRCS conservation efforts associated with its GWWA Initiative being implemented in eight states covering the Appalachian breeding range of the species.

Congratulations to The Splinter Group

In February The Splinter Group of Carrboro won a Bronze Addy for their creative work on Audubon NC’s Good Egg campaign. The marketing firm designed the logo and collateral materials for the project (www.goodeggnc.org). The American Advertising Federation sponsors the ADDYs, the world’s largest advertising competition. Congratulations team!

North Carolina birders make great showing in 2012 Great Backyard Bird Count

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2012 Great Backyard Bird Count. Once again North Carolina birders demonstrated their love of a friendly competition.

- NC was ranked #4 among states submitting the most checklists, with 5,116 lists submitted.
- Three NC towns were among the top ten localities submitting the most checklists: #2 - Charlotte, #6 - Raleigh, #10 - Durham
- Red-winged Blackbird was the most abundant species spotted in NC during the GBBC, with 19,578 individuals reported, and Northern Cardinal was once again the species most commonly seen in the state.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this important citizen science project.

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: Golden-winged Warbler by Donald Mullaney

p. 3: Volunteers, Peregrine Falcon, Bufflehead, and American Bittern by Mark Buckler

p. 4: Snow Geese at Pocosin Lakes and Prothonotary Warbler by Walker Golder

p. 5: Golden-winged Warbler by Curtis Smalling; Tundra Swans by Walker Golder

p. 6: Waterbird census and American Oystercatcher by Lindsay Addison; Matt Jeffrey in Bahamas by Walker Golder

p. 7: Shorebirds in Bahamas and American Oystercatcher chick by Walker Golder

p. 8 and 9: Golden-winged Warbler nest, Lili Duriaux-Chavaria and Diane Allison, Wood Thrush with geolocator, Tri-colored Heron in Nicaragua, eBird workshop in Nicaragua, High Country Audubon Society volunteers by Curtis Smalling

pp. 10 and 11: Least Terns and Black Skimmers by Lindsay Addison

p. 13: Photo by David Disher



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audubon events

[VISIT NCAUDUBON.ORG FOR MORE EVENT INFORMATION]

Mason Inlet Free Friday field trips

Every Friday from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Trips run through September (Check www.ncaudubon.org for last date)

Mason Inlet Waterbird Management Area on the north end of Wrightsville Beach is a great place to learn about barrier island ecology and the colorful coastal birds that nest on North Carolina's beaches. Please join Audubon North Carolina naturalists on a free guided tour of this fascinating sanctuary where you can get close-up looks at nesting birds and chicks.

There is no need to register for these trips. Meet at the kiosk in front of the traffic circle by the Shell Island Resort at the end of N. Lumina Avenue. Bring comfortable walking shoes, sunscreen, a hat, water, and binoculars if you have them. Audubon staff will provide spotting scopes.

Pine Island Sanctuary Exploration

Every Thursday from June 7 - September 13

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Cost: \$10 (Bring check or cash)

Join Audubon staff on a guided hike of the Donal C. O'Brien, Jr. Sanctuary and Audubon Center at Pine Island on the northern Outer Banks. These trips will offer great birding and wildlife viewing in a variety of barrier island habitats along with explorations of grassy marshes, wetlands, maritime forest, and Currituck Sound. 159 species of birds inhabit the Pine Island Sanctuary. Bring sunscreen, water, hat, comfortable shoes (not sandals), camera, and binoculars. Some binoculars will be provided. Register by contacting Pine Island, 300 Audubon Drive, Corolla, NC 27927, 252-453-0603, mbuckler@audubon.org

Directions to meeting site:

From the intersection of US 158 and NC 12 in Kitty Hawk, drive north on NC 12 for approximately 10 miles. Turn left on Audubon Drive and follow the paved road to the Pine Island Center; a 1920s era hunting lodge.

We welcome your feedback! Contact Ida Phillips, Director of Communications, at iphillips@audubon.org or 919.929.3899.