



Registration Opens March 21st for Blowing Rock!

Mickey Shortt

As birds are poised to travel to the High Country's mountainous forests, waterways and scenic overlooks, we invite you to do the same for our spring meeting in Blowing Rock, NC! The dates for our spring meeting are Thursday April 28 through Saturday April 30. There will be something for everyone at this meeting including numerous field trips, evening owl prowls and our featured speakers, Scott Whittle and Tom Stephenson, authors of *The Warbler Guide* book and associated app. **Online registration opens Monday, March 21 at 8 a.m.**

Our last meeting in Blowing Rock was held in 2011 when participants tallied 130 species including Swainson's Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Ruffed Grouse and both cuckoo species! This year, we hope to focus on warblers, with several walks geared to get looks at specialty warblers and migrant flocks. One goal of the meeting is to have participants walk away with a better appreciation for, and understanding of, this special group of birds.

To search for these and other migrant species, we'll travel throughout the High Country to many iconic locales. The Linville Gorge, Grandfather Mountain, and Elk Knob will be the backdrop for us as we enjoy the annual passage of flycatchers, vireos, warblers and other migrants on their way to the High Country and points north. A few trips will visit Lewis Fork Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway - one known site for breeding Cerulean Warbler. Participants searching for the greatest variety should find it at Valle Crucis Community Park where just about anything in the High Country is a possibility.

A trip to engage newer birders and teach birding skills will be offered on Friday, and a trip led by and designed for young birders will be offered on Saturday. Birders who haven't birded at the Wagner Property will want to sign up

early, as this opportunity has once again been provided exclusively for our meeting!

A new experience for Friday evening will be offered at this meeting: owl prowls. Three opportunities to bird in the evening will be offered following a social gathering on Friday evening. We'll target the Northern Saw-whet Owl on each of these trips!

New locations include the Wilson Creek Area - an opportunity to travel from the edge of the Blue Ridge down to the base of the mountains through varied habitats that bring varied bird species. Another new trip - Big Lost Cove Cliffs - provides an opportunity to spot a Peregrine Falcon on a hike out to remarkable cliffs that look toward Grandfather Mountain.

Our meeting will be headquartered at the historic Green Park Inn. The Green Park is located on US-321 in Blowing Rock (travel north on US-321 from I-40 in Hickory). At press time, the Green Park Inn is full. However it never hurts to check for cancellations. Check with the Green Park Inn by calling (828) 414-9230. Room rates vary nightly from \$78 on Thursday for a Standard Queen to \$139 on Friday and Saturday for a Superior King room with a balcony. The inn will answer any questions about the rooms. They are offering us a third-night stay discount too - ensure you mention the Carolina Bird Club to get these prices! Rates include an early breakfast and coffee-makers in each room.

A second option for lodging is one mile away from the Green Park at the Holiday Inn Express in Blowing Rock. Rooms are \$69 on Thursday and \$89 nightly on Friday and Saturday. All rooms have 2 queen beds. The hotel offers a

(Continued on page 3)



Join the CBC in Alaska June 23rd – July 3rd!

Ron Clark

Escape the hot southern summer and come with us on an exciting 10-night trip to the cooler climes of Alaska for birds that can't be found anywhere else in the ABA Area.

We'll cover the state from the Kenai Peninsula to Denali National Park and then spend three days in Nome. Flying to Anchorage on June 23rd, our first night's hotel sits on Lake Spenard where you can see Common Loon and Red-necked Grebe in breeding plumage. Other locally found species include Common Goldeneye, Mew Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Black-billed Magpie and possibly Hudsonian Godwit.

Starting south for the Kenai Peninsula, we'll walk the boardwalks at Potter Marsh with nesting Arctic Terns and Violet-green Swallows. Western Wood-Pewee and Lincoln's Sparrow are possible. Then on to Anchor Point where Northwestern Crows are common, along with 20-40 Bald Eagles and "Sooty" Fox Sparrow. Our next stop is Homer. While birding the spit, we'll see hundreds of Black-legged Kittiwakes and likely Pigeon Guillemot, Brant and Common Murre.

Saturday morning we'll take a three-hour boat ride in the Kachemak Bay. As we watch dozens of Sea Otters around us, we should easily add Aleutian Tern, Marbled and Kittlitz's Murrelets and Tufted Puffin. Horned Puffin is also possible. Thousands of Black-legged Kittiwakes and Common Murres nest on the rocks. We should have very close views of Pigeon Guillemot and Pelagic Cormorant. Surf-bird and Black Turnstone are usually seen. The last two trips produced Sabine's Gull and Yellow-billed Loon.

After leaving Homer, we'll bird our way halfway back to Anchorage, looking for Pine Grosbeak, Gray Jay, Townsend's Warbler and Varied Thrush. The night will be spent in cabins on Summit Lake. On Sunday, we'll work our way north of Anchorage, stopping at Eagle River and Arctic Valley, among other sites. On most trips we see Moose, sometimes with calves, Grizzly and Black Bear, and Dall Sheep.

We'll work our way north to Denali National Park on Monday and Tuesday, looking for American Golden-Plover, Wilson's Warbler, American Tree Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Spruce Grouse, Rough-legged Hawk, Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes, and American Dipper. At 20,322 feet, Denali is the tallest peak in North America. Visible only 15% of the time, hopefully the mountain will grace us with a view. We'll drive into the park to the 16-mile turnaround point and seek out Willow Ptarmigan.

Nome is our destination for Wednesday morning. With a

population of around 4,000, it has no traffic lights and, in summer, no night. We'll bird the harbor, picking up Glaucous Gull, and then drive out Council Road to Safety Sound, following the Bering Sea. At the mouth of the Nome River, we'll look for Sabine's and Slaty-backed Gulls and Bar-tailed Godwit. Long-tailed and Parasitic Jaegers nest on the tundra and Common Eider, Lapland Longspur, Pacific Loon, Pacific Golden-Plover, Harlequin and Long-tailed Ducks and Common Redpoll are easily found. We'll scan the sea for Arctic Loon and the roadside and mudflats for Red-necked Stint. Eastern Yellow Wagtail is expected, and Sandhill Crane, "Taverner's" Cackling Goose, Red-necked Phalarope and eiders are possible.

On Thursday and Friday we'll search for Short-eared Owl, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Gyrfalcon, Bluethroat, Arctic Warbler, Hoary Redpoll, Willow and Rock Ptarmigan, Wandering Tattler, and Northern Wheatear. Last year we found a male Spectacled Eider! Mammals including Musk Oxen and Caribou are expected.

Our half-day on Saturday will be spent on Council Road. It changes from day-to-day, so we'll check it one more time before flying back to Anchorage in late afternoon. On Sunday, July 3rd, we'll return home, with many lifers and memories of this beautiful state.

The leader is **Ron Clark** and this is his eighth trip to Alaska, taking groups there five times.

The price for double occupancy is \$2,610. Single supplement is \$1,130. This covers ten nights' lodging, ground transportation, Homer boat trip, entry fees, and guide services. Breakfast is included with most lodging. You pay roundtrip airfare to Anchorage, roundtrip airfare between Anchorage and Nome (estimated to be \$350-\$400), lunches, dinners and any personal spending.

The trip is limited to 7 participants. Because the single supplement is high, we may take eight if the lodging works better. Then, the price for double occupancy would be reduced to \$2,440. Keep in mind that Alaska has only four months for tourism, so prices are higher than many other birding destinations.

A deposit of \$1,000, due by April 1st, will hold your spot. The balance is due by May 10th. If you must cancel, a full refund will be given until May 10th. Cancellation after the 10th allows for a refund only if someone is found to take your place.

For more information, or to reserve your spot, contact Ron Clark at waxwing@bellsouth.net. You can also get a species list from last year and a link to photos.

CBC Spring Meeting Schedule

Friday, April 29

Morning - Half-Day Trips (all times a.m.)

- Trip 1: Wagner Property 7:00
- Trip 2: Valle Crucis Park 7:10
- Trip 3: Birding for Beginners 7:30
- Trip 4: BRP North: Lewis Fork 7:00
- Trip 5: Rich Mt./Elk Knob 7:20

Afternoon - Half-Day Trips (all times p.m.)

- Trip 6: Valle Crucis Park 12:50
- Trip 7: Meat Camp ESA 1:00
- Trip 8: Linville Falls/BRP 1:00
- Trip 9: Boone Greenway 1:15
- Trip 10: Blue Ridge Parkway South 1:15

All Day Trips (all times a.m.)

- Trip 11: Blue Ridge Parkway 7:15
- Trip 12: Wilson Creek Area 7:30
- Trip 13: Table Rock/Linville Gorge 7:00
- Trip 14: Grandfather Mountain 7:20

Evening Trips (all time p.m.)

- Trip 30: BRP Owl Prowl 8:15
- Trip 31: Elk Knob Owl Prowl 8:30
- Trip 32: Grandfather Mt. Owl Prowl 8:30

Saturday, April 30

Morning - Half-Day Trips (all times a.m.)

- Trip 15: Young Birder Trip/Valle Crucis 7:15
- Trip 16: Bass and Trout Lakes 7:15
- Trip 17: Wagner Property 7:00
- Trip 18: Valle Crucis Park 7:00
- Trip 19: Warbler Search 6:45
- Trip 20: Linville Falls/BRP 7:20

Afternoon - Half-Day Trips (all times p.m.)

- Trip 21: Meat Camp ESA 1:00
- Trip 22: Grandfather Mt. Stewardship Land 1:00
- Trip 23: Warbler Workshop and Search 1:30
- Trip 24: Price Lake Hike 1:15
- Trip 25: Valle Crucis Park 12:50

All Day Trips (all times a.m.)

- Trip 26: Elk Knob/Rich Mountain 7:20
- Trip 27: Big Lost Cove Cliffs 7:30
- Trip 28: Warbler Big Day 6:50
- Trip 29: Grandfather Mt. East & West 7:10



(Continued from page 1)

Registration

complimentary hot breakfast each morning, which starts at 5:30 a.m. to accommodate our early starts. Please call (828) 295-4422 and mention the Carolina Bird Club to get our rates! All rooms rates are before tax.

A buffet dinner will be prepared by the Green Park Inn's chef on Saturday evening. This delicious meal will be provided for \$30 per person (which includes taxes and gratuity) and includes a salad, bread, entrée options, several sides, and dessert. An equally delicious vegetarian option is available!

Following our meal on Saturday, our featured speakers Scott Whittle and Tom Stephenson will describe the beauty, field marks, and their passion for the nearly 40 species of warblers found in the eastern US. Their book will be available for sale and signing at a reduced rate!

Whatever trips you choose, you will find friendly trip leaders, beautiful birds, and gorgeous vistas. We hope you enjoy looking forward to this special meeting in a special location!



Essential Planning Notes

The times listed above are when the cars are lined up in the parking lot and leaving. Please be there at least 10 minutes early and identify yourself to the leader. If you decide not to go on a trip, either scratch through your name beforehand on the supplied lists at the registration table, or show up at the meeting place and tell the leader. Please consider doing this in advance so others may use the open spot if desired.

All trips meet and depart from the Green Park Inn in Blowing Rock. Look for the placard with your trip number. You will receive a sheet with directions for all your trips in your registration packet. Please bring it on each trip as caravans sometimes break down. Food for purchase during field trips may be somewhat limited. Accordingly, plan to take snacks and beverages with you, and be sure to pack a lunch for the all day trips.

We try to take as few vehicles as possible on field trips in order to save fuel, make caravanning easier, and to make better use of the limited parking that exists at some stops. Please plan on carpooling. Enjoy the trips and the meeting!

Spring Meeting Field Trip Descriptions

Trips 1 and 17: Wagner Property

Probably the only way you can visit this property is through the CBC meeting; don't miss this chance! The owners have given us permission to bird it during our meeting weekend. This area has been a favorite of anyone who has visited. Several Green Herons nest in the marsh, and an American Bittern has been spotted several times. Passerines are always plentiful in migration, with a variety of warblers, vireos, tanagers and orioles.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 35 minutes. Facilities: limited. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces and driving.

Trips 2, 6, 18 and 25: Valle Crucis Community Park

This park is one of the gems of the area and holds the only county record for King Rail and Chuck-will's-widow. It is bounded by the Watauga River, agricultural land and forests. Nesting birds include seven species of flycatcher: Least, Willow, Acadian, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested and Eastern Phoebe. Also look for four species of vireos, both orioles and three swallows. As far as warblers, over 25 species have been seen here in migration. Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler and Northern Parula are local breeders. With easy walking on paved trails and open viewing areas, this is a High Country favorite.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 30 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on paved surfaces.

Trip 3: Birding Techniques for Beginners at Bass and Trout Lakes

This trip will dedicate a large amount of time to teaching various birding techniques including: locating birds, basic vocal and visual identification tips, group birder etiquette, and other useful birding tips. This trip is designed for any beginning to intermediate birder looking to enhance their birding skills in the setting of Bass and Trout Lakes. This trip will take a slower approach, with time spent focusing on techniques and field marks rather than a complete species inventory of everything at the park.

Limit: 12. Travel time: 10 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on unpaved surfaces (uneven at Trout Lake).

Trip 4: Blue Ridge Parkway North: Lewis Fork Overlook

If you want to see a Cerulean Warbler, Lewis Fork is a very good spot. Breeding warblers include Ovenbird,

Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, and American Redstart. This site along the Parkway will no doubt have many migrating birds as well. At Jeffress Park we'll walk the one-mile Cascade Trail that goes through hardwoods and then along a creek. Some of the breeders are Hooded and Canada Warblers, Wood Thrush, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Scarlet Tanager.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 35 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: hiking on uneven surfaces.

Trip 5: Rich Mountain and Elk Knob State Park

We will visit these two sites and others within the Amphibolite peaks. This is a great location for open-country birds and early succession habitat species. The trip involves some hiking on steep, uneven terrain. Bring your lunch. Species of the area include Vesper Sparrow, Least Flycatcher, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and many northern hardwood and high elevation birds.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 40 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on unpaved surfaces.

Trips 7 and 21: Meat Camp Environmental Study Area

Over 170 species have been recorded on this private 10-acre site since 1999. Some of the nesting birds are Common Yellowthroat, Green Heron, Yellow Warbler, and Least and Willow Flycatchers. Black-billed Cuckoo have also nested here on occasion. Lingering Sora, Virginia Rail and American Bittern are possible. Many migrants should be seen in this wetland site. This is an easy ¾ mile walk. If we have time, we'll go to nearby Green Valley Park, another excellent migration spot.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 35 minutes. Facilities: no. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces.

Trips 8 and 20: Linville Falls via the Blue Ridge Parkway

This trip will cover the campground and some of the less strenuous trails along the gorge and falls. Much of this area was never logged due to the steep terrain, so the trees are mostly old-growth. Red Crossbill and Swainson's Warbler are possible here. Peregrine Falcons also nest nearby. We'll look for Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Ovenbird and Rose-breasted Grosbeak among others.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 40 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on unpaved surfaces.

Spring Meeting Field Trip Descriptions

Trip 9: Boone Greenway

Following the New River, this greenway passes through a variety of habitats, from fields and stream borders to woodlands. It is flat, easy walking and should provide a wide assortment of migrants in the riparian habitat. Willow Flycatcher, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler and Eastern Kingbird are some of the breeders. Four, or possibly five, vireos can be found, along with many other passerines. Shorebird potential is good along the river, or in the newly constructed wetland area. If nearby fields have standing water, we could find some more there. Possibilities include Least and Pectoral Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plover and Wilson's Snipe.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 15 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on paved surfaces.

Trip 10: Blue Ridge Parkway South

This trip will visit Bass Lake, Price Lake, and the eastern slopes of Grandfather Mountain. Bass Lake, located in Moses H. Cone Park, offers some of the best birding along the Parkway. We'll find birds usually associated with higher elevation forests. These include Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Warblers could include Blackburnian, Ovenbird, Hooded, Canada, and Chestnut-sided.

Limit: 16. Travel time: multiple destinations within 35 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on unpaved surfaces (uneven at Trout Lake).

Trip 11: Blue Ridge Parkway

This trip will combine several spots covered in half-day trips for those folks who want to take a short lunch and keep birding. These spots include Bass and Trout Lakes, Price Lake, Lewis Fork Overlook, E.B. Jeffress Park, and other overlooks and short trails along the way. Most of these sites are described in other trips. You will need to pack a lunch, since it's a full day trip. Expect a wide variety of birds as we will cover many different habitats.

Limit: 16. Travel time: multiple destinations. Facilities: yes. Activity level: hiking on uneven surfaces and some car birding.

Trip 12: Wilson Creek Area

This trip will spend the day in the Pisgah National Forest searching for spring migrants down the Blue Ridge escarpment. We should see many stages of spring as it travels steeply down in elevation through the Wilson Creek drainage. The route passes into the breeding range of Yellow-throated Warbler and

Northern Parula. We'll also look for migratory Blackburnian Warbler, Swainson's Warbler and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Pack a lunch for this trip.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 90 minutes. Facilities: limited. Activity level: hiking on uneven surfaces and some car birding.

Trip 13: Table Rock and The Linville Gorge

Comprised of nearly 12,000 acres of congressionally designated wilderness, The Linville Gorge is often referred to as the Grand Canyon of the East. This elevation range should be excellent for such species as Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Green Warbler and Black-throated Blue Warbler. The gorge is also host to Peregrine Falcon. This should be a great trip that includes a hike along the rim of the gorge. Pack a lunch and be prepared with sunscreen!

Limit: 16. Travel time: 90 minutes. Facilities: limited. Activity level: moderate hiking on uneven surfaces and some car birding.

Trip 14: Grandfather Mountain Full Day

Spend the day on the eastern, western and southern faces of Grandfather Mountain. This trip will involve hiking on the Profile Trail in the state park, exploring the high elevation spruce-fir forest on Stewardship Foundation land and strolling beside streams along the Nuwati trail. Expect numerous migrants in varied habitats with quite a bit of walking! Blackburnian Warbler, Canada Warbler, Veery, and several other songsters will be sought out on a day on this iconic mountain. Pack a lunch or plan to eat at the park's restaurant.

Limit: 16. Travel time: multiple destinations within an hour. Facilities: limited. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces. Fee: \$6/person.

Trip 15: Young Birder Trip to Valle Crucis Park

This trip is especially designed for the up-and-coming group of birders. It will center around Valle Crucis park with the possibilities to see Yellow Warbler, Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat as well as orioles and a few flycatchers. The park is one of those spots that could turn up just about anything!

Limit: 12. Travel time: 30 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on paved surfaces.

Trip 16: Bass and Trout Lakes

This trip will visit Bass Lake and Trout Lake along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Bass Lake, located in Moses H. Cone Park, offers some of the best birding along the

(Continued on page 6)

Spring Meeting Field Trip Descriptions

Parkway. The trail around 22-acre Bass Lake goes through a mix of conifers. Expect a good variety of migrants along with breeders such as House Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch and Barn Swallow. The one-mile loop trail around the 16-acre Trout Lake goes through a hemlock canopy with a rhododendron understory. We should find birds usually associated with higher elevation forests. These include Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Warblers could include Blackburnian, Ovenbird, Hooded, Canada, and Chestnut-sided. Limit: 16. Travel time: 10 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on unpaved surfaces (uneven at Trout Lake).

Trip 19: Warbler Search

The High Country is renowned for the variety of warblers that breed and pass through the region. This trip will move through multiple habitats with a focus on this special suite of birds. This will mean looking high and low, experiencing “warbler neck” and dipping in multiple areas searching for as many warblers as possible in one morning!

Limit: 16. Travel time: multiple destinations. Facilities: limited. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces.

Trip 22: Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation Land

Visit the Stewardship Foundation park in search of northern species such as Common Raven, Canada Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler and Red Crossbill. We'll take a couple of short walks on this trip and enjoy the views and the birds on this mountain of abundant life and diversity.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 35 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces. Fee: \$6/person.

Trip 23: Warbler Workshop and Search

The High Country is renowned for the variety of warblers that breed and pass through the region. This trip will first examine the field marks, habitat and other distinguishing characteristics of our warblers, and then move into a couple of habitats to search for migrant and breeding warblers.

Limit: 16. Travel time: multiple destinations. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces.

Trip 24: Price Lake Hike

This trip will follow the flat 2-½-mile loop trail around the lake in Julian Price Park. We can expect a

good variety of birds including Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Warbler species include Canada, Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Black-and-white, and Northern Parula. If the water is low, a variety of shorebirds could be present. Sandpipers may include Least, White-rumped, Solitary, Spotted and Semipalmated. Both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and Short-billed Dowitcher have also shown up.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 20 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces.

Trip 26: Elk Knob and Elk Knob Game Lands (Rich Mountain)

Explore the forests of Elk Knob State Park and the open areas between Rich Mountain and Snake Mountain. Rising more than 5,500 feet above sea level in northwestern North Carolina, Elk Knob is one of the peaks in the Amphibolite Range. The mountain is characterized by northern hardwood forest and supports birds such as Ruffed Grouse, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Broad-winged Hawk, Veery and Canada Warbler. The open areas between Rich Mountain and Snake Mountain will be explored for raptors, sparrows and freshly arrived warbler species. Pack a lunch for this trip!

Limit: 16. Travel time: 30 minutes. Facilities: yes. Activity level: walking/hiking on uneven surfaces.

Trip 27: Big Lost Cove Cliffs

Explore a unique rocky outcropping within the Wilson Creek Area of the Pisgah National Forest. This trip is a hike down to spectacular overlooks of the Blue Ridge. Expect migrant songsters along the way; Peregrine Falcons have nested on the cliffs and have been seen in recent years. Pack a lunch and plan on a 3-mile round trip hike out to the overlook.

Limit: 12. Travel time: 60 minutes. Facilities: in travel only. Activity level: challenging hiking on uneven surfaces.

Trip 28: Warbler Big Day

The High Country is renowned for the variety of warblers that breed and pass through the region. This trip will move through multiple habitats with a focus on this special suite of birds. This will mean looking high and low, experiencing “warbler neck” and dipping in multiple areas searching for as many warblers as possible in one full day! Pack a lunch for this trip!

Limit: 12. Travel time: N/A. Facilities: limited. Activity level: walking/hiking on uneven surfaces.

Spring Meeting Field Trip Descriptions

Trip 29: Grandfather Mountain: Eastern and Western slopes

The Profile Trail is part of Grandfather Mountain State Park and follows a creek before a moderate climb up toward the crest. The trip will stop about 1.5 miles up the Profile Trail. This is a good area for Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Winter Wren, Wood Thrush, Veery and Brown Creeper. Warblers could include Canada, Ovenbird, Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, and Black-and-white. The Tana-waha Trail runs along the Blue Ridge Parkway near the Linn Cove Viaduct. It is less hilly and meanders through a deciduous canopy with laurel and rhododendron understory. Expect a variety of warblers, vireos and other passerines. Pack a lunch for this trip. Limit: 16. Travel time: 45 minutes. Facilities: limited. Activity level: moderate hiking on uneven surfaces.

Evening Trips: *You asked for them! These experiences seek out the nocturnal bird species of our spring meeting.*

Trip 30: Blue Ridge Parkway Owl Prowl

This experience will comb the Blue Ridge Parkway south of Blowing Rock in search of Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl and the local specialty Northern Saw-Whet Owl. In addition, we'll look for American Woodcock. Bring a headlamp or small flashlight and dress warmly.

Limit: 16. Travel time: multiple destinations. Facilities: limited. Activity level: walking on uneven sur-

faces at night.

Trip 31: Elk Knob Owl Prowl

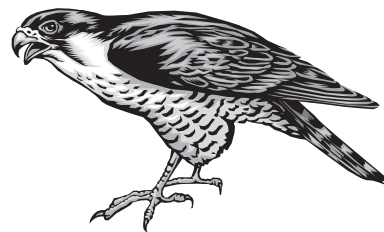
Travel to the high forest in the Amphibolites in search of a suite of night-time birds and insects. This trip will search for Northern Saw-whet Owl, Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl and Eastern Screech Owl in addition to moths of the High Country. Bring a headlamp or small flashlight and dress warmly.

Limit: 16. Travel time: multiple destinations. Facilities: limited. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces at night.

Trip 32: Grandfather Mountain Owl Prowl

After traveling to the top of Grandfather Mountain's Linville Peak, we'll work our way down in elevation while making stops listening for the owls that breed on the slopes of Grandfather Mountain. Bring a headlamp or small flashlight and dress warmly.

Limit: 16. Travel time: 35 minutes. Facilities: limited. Activity level: walking on uneven surfaces at night.



The Carolina Bird Club is looking for a Newsletter Editor!

Steve Shultz

As noted in the prior Newsletter, the club seeks an editor to take over production of the Newsletter beginning with the May-June 2016 edition, which has an April 15th deadline. Qualifications include the ability to commit to producing six editions per year meeting strict publication deadlines, the ability to run and use Microsoft Publisher software (or equivalent), and reasonable familiarity with currently-acceptable grammar, punctuation, and style.

The Newsletter Editor works with planners to organize, write, and format meeting announcements and trip descriptions, coordinates with the website editor on content delivery and timing, reviews and approves submitted content for publication, and serves as an *ex officio* member on the club's Executive Committee. The Editor receives no compensation and serves an unspecified term at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

If you are a member with capacity to assist the club through production of the Newsletter and excited about incorporating your creative ideas into a publication that reaches hundreds of individuals and institutions interested in the enjoyment and conservation of birds in the Carolinas, please contact me at newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org, or via telephone at 919-608-2069.

Hawk-watching in South Dakota (The “Other” Pelagic Birding)

Michael Tove

Winter in central South Dakota is famous for two things: insanely frigid weather and an abundance of raptors. This past January 14-18, Mike Riley and I ventured there to search for one and brave the other. Following an evening flight to Sioux Falls on the 14th, we struck out before dawn in our rented SUV for the 200+ mile drive west on I-90. This highway soon came to signify an important birding landmark.

As a gray dawn broke over an utterly barren landscape of treeless snow that stretched from horizon to horizon, the complete absence of anything living was noteworthy. For nearly an hour we saw nothing save a pair of crows and a few starlings. Suddenly, it all changed when we spotted a Snowy Owl perched on a power pole. I pulled over and even backed up a quarter-mile (fortunately, there were no other cars in sight). We drank in views as the owl gazed over its back at us before flying to the next pole. Minutes after returning to the highway, we saw a Rough-legged Hawk and just like that, the drought was over.

Pelagic birding involves trolling over miles of ocean until crossing paths with free-flying seabirds. “Trolling” for hawks by car is similar, except where a boat can travel in any desired direction, a car is restricted to drivable roads. But, there’s a catch. Ideally, roads must be passable enough to not get stuck, yet primitive enough to only be used by farmers, birders and the insane. Fortunately, central South Dakota is crisscrossed with a network of such roads that continues for miles.

Pre-trip research revealed a hotspot located south of I-90 between the towns of Vivian and Draper that one veteran hawk-watcher termed “The Promised Land.” Perhaps most remarkable about the trip was the stark difference north vs. south of the interstate. Anywhere north of the highway, birdlife was nil, but immediately south, hawks were plentiful. A relatively recent anomaly, this phenomenon has been noted by multiple hawk-watchers over the past few years.

We planned to start on the western edge of the “Promised Land” immediately south of Draper, but driving a gas-guzzling SUV, we wanted to start on a full tank. However, Draper’s nearest gas station is eleven miles west in the town of Murdo (population 692). After fueling up and getting a quick bit of lunch, we began in earnest. The dirt roads were actu-

ally plowed, mostly snow-free, and frozen solid, which made driving easy except that our tires sprayed an ever-thickening coat of iced dirt over the car.

Within minutes of starting we saw Golden Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks. About a mile south, we turned left on an east-west road that would become familiar ground. At the corner, a great number of hay bales strewn across the field were covered with scores of Ring-necked Pheasants. Here we also found a Merlin perched atop a wisp of juniper. Two forms of Merlin occur in the Dakotas. The nominate one familiar to us, and a pale prairie form known as Richardson’s Merlin. This was a “regular” one, but still a nice find.

We continued east, searching and scanning. Although the road was lined with telephone poles, virtually none of the birds we saw used them. Rather, they perched on hay bales, isolated posts in the middle of the fields, or on the ground. Were it not for the continuous blanket of white, picking them out would have been next to impossible.

As with marine pelagic trips, hawk “pelagics” combine long periods of few or no birds with the sudden discovery of something really good. We cruised along until a white shape in the field stopped us. It was an immature Ferruginous Hawk, one of our target species. Although at a distance, we drank it in before moving on. Soon after, we spotted a second one flying and then landing beside the road. Holding our breaths, we crept up and stopped directly beside a fully adult bird that seemed to ignore our presence. Finally it flew and came right past the car, my camera burning images the whole time. Continuing on, we found many more raptors, including two more Ferruginous Hawks.

About 3 p.m., we left the “Promised Land” for a drive north into the Fort Pierre National Grasslands, the traditional area for winter raptor concentrations in South Dakota. But apart from some huge flocks of Greater Prairie Chickens, plus a thin smattering of rough-legs and eagles, it was surprisingly empty. That Bald Eagles thrive in the middle of snow-crusting grassland prairies with no water in sight was somewhat surprising, until we saw how adept they are at taking the local abundance of pheasants, prairie chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse. We ended up in Pierre for the night.

Hawk-watching in South Dakota (The “Other” Pelagic Birding)

Micheal Tove

The next day began at dawn at the Oahe Dam. Apart from a small flock of Cackling Geese and a cadre of Bald Eagles, there was not much, so we headed south to the Promised Land, this time starting south of Vivian. Except for an abundance of Horned Larks, with a dusting of Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings, there was nothing until we crossed I-90. Immediately south, we found two adult Bald Eagles and an immature Golden Eagle. It was odd that while 90% of the goldens were young, 90% of balds were adult. The eagles were soon joined by a rough-leg, a Northern Harrier and a Ferruginous Hawk.

We continued south, turning west on several cross-roads that dead-ended, but the birding was so good, it hardly mattered. It was a gray day, with temperatures hovering around zero and enough wind out of the west to make staying outside without a LOT of layers unpleasant. Finally, we found a west-bound road that didn't end. For a while, the birds seemed to taper off, but then we rounded a bend and saw a bird perched on a stack of large hay bales. It deliberately perched low enough to be sheltered but high enough to see over the top. If a fresh pheasant was to be on the menu, this ambush strategy couldn't have been better.

As we neared, it became evident this was not a “roughie” but rather a big falcon. Question was, could it be “big enough?” The ultimate South Dakota prize is Gyrfalcon, but Prairie Falcons are common and this bird didn't look THAT large. Still it seemed too dark for a Prairie Falcon, so we bundled up and trekked across the frozen wastelands to get closer. I popped off a few shots when the bird launched: heavily streaked below and NO black axillars – immature Gyrfalcon!!! It flew a wide circle around the field and landed on a distant hay bale. We pressed onward, getting more looks until it took off and departed. When I say “departed” I mean the way a bolt of lightning “departs” a cloud. This bird was truly fast.

With high fives and general elation, we drove to Murdo for gas and a quick bite before continuing.

Our afternoon route was a repeat of the previous day. At the pheasant bales, we paused to scan and saw the head of a bird peeking over the top of a bale. It was a small, grayish bob of a head with bits of white about the face. Overall, it seemed almost reminiscent of some cute pet animal like a gerbil. Not sure what to

think, we inched forward until getting to the side of the bale. There we discovered that cute little rounded head sat on top of the massive shoulders of an adult gray-phase Gyrfalcon! Two gyrs in two hours; but this bird was simply stunning, and ambush hunting exactly like the first bird did earlier. I got some shots before it took off and quickly reached afterburner speed .

Farther on, we found a third massive falcon perched on a distant post. It flew. Based on size, heft and rounded wing-tips (for a falcon), we called it a third gyr – until it circled back overhead flashing black axillars: Prairie Falcon. It was remarkable how Gyrfalcon-like this Prairie Falcon was, but the big clue (apart from the black axillars) was how pale this bird was compared with the others. South Dakota Gyrfalcons almost entirely consist of gray-phase birds, and to my knowledge there's never been a white one. Big female Prairie Falcons can approach Gyrfalcons in size and when they do their body and wing shapes similarly change to resemble their larger cousin. An hour later, we arrived at the first gyr's bales to find another, slightly smaller bird on the exact same spot. It was a rough-leg. In other words, that “small” immature gyr was actually BIGGER than a Rough-legged Hawk. But in comparison to the huge hay bale, it seemed deceptively small. Good lessons. We finished the day with two more Prairie Falcons (of more “expected” size and proportion) and a “flock” of three Ferruginous Hawks. What a day!!!

Our third day was COLD, with temperatures as low as -12, but unlike the previous two days, it was cloudless. Most species were in greater abundance, and the photographic opportunities were remarkable. At one point, I was outside the car, photographing Golden and Bald Eagles in one tree when I looked up to see a Richardson's Merlin roaring past at close range. We also located a mixed flock of Greater Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse, and I got in-flight photos of both side by side. We ended the day exploring a new hotspot north of the town of Presho. For a mere three days of birding, we managed an impressive list of ten raptor species plus Snowy Owl, and not one vulture or accipiter in the mix.

I've done a lot of hawk-watching over the years but never anything quite like this. Central South Dakota is truly a hawk-watcher's paradise.

Young Birder Scholarships Available!

The Carolina Bird Club is pleased to announce a new program aimed at encouraging teenagers to participate in birding and conservation activities. The program provides a scholarship of up to \$500 to assist young birders in attending camps and other events that specifically enhance birding skills and/or encourage avian conservation.

Scholarships are available to any young birder, aged 13 to 18, living in the Carolinas and who is a member of the Carolina Young Birders Club. Camps or events funded by the scholarships must be focused on bird-related content and support young birders' knowledge of birds, improve their birding skills, or enhance their educational awareness of the natural world.

Eligible expenses include registration fees, lodging, food, and program costs. Recipients of awards must confirm to the CBC in writing that camp or event registration is secured before the CBC will disburse funds. **Completed applications are accepted each year between January 1 and April 1.** Applicants will be notified no later than May 15 of their application results.

For information on the Carolina Young Birders Club, visit: <http://www.carolinayoungbirdersclub.org>.

For the scholarship application form, visit: <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/grants/ScholarshipForm.pdf>

Lane Joins Executive Committee

Following the resignation of Scott Winton as Eastern North Carolina Vice President, President Irvin Pitts appointed Wilmington resident Sherry Lane to fill the

unexpired term. The annual election for open Executive Committee positions is scheduled for the Blowing Rock spring meeting.

CBC Spring Election

As the calendar rolls toward spring, it can only mean one thing. Yes, time again for CBC officer elections. We promise that no one will call your home, plant "vote for" signs on your lawn, or bombard your television viewing hours with mud-slinging advertisements. But we would like for you to participate by reviewing the slate of nominees below and voting at the Blowing Rock meeting.

The nominees for Executive Committee positions are:

Western NC Vice President - Steve Tracy, Gastonia

Eastern NC Vice President - Sherry Lane, Wilmington

Western NC Member-at-Large - Mickey Shortt, Linville

Treasurer - Paul Serridge - Greenville, SC

Incumbents in positions eligible for re-election are:

President – Irvin Pitts, Lexington SC
(Second and final one-year term)

Secretary – Doris Ratchford, Todd NC
(Third and final one-year term)

SC Member-at-Large – Lewis Burke, Columbia
(Second and final two-year term)

While the slate listed above are members who have expressed a willingness to serve, any member may be nominated from the floor at the time of the election.

The Newsletter and The Chat are online on the CBC website, and you can elect either electronic or paper delivery. The most recent electronic editions of each are only accessible to CBC members.

To access the "members only" content, you must first create a login and password.

This can be done at the Member Services page at:

[http:// www.carolinabirdclub.org/members/](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/members/)



Save a Stamp!
Beginning 3/21 @ 8a.m. Register Online
at www.carolinabirdclub.org!



CBC Blowing Rock Registration Form - April 2016

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone (____) _____ — _____ Evening phone (____) _____ — _____

Email _____

Meeting Registration (Member) _____ x \$25 = \$ _____

Meeting Registration (Non-member) _____ x \$30 = \$ _____

Buffet Dinner _____ x \$30 = \$ _____

To pre-register for field trips, place the trip number(s) in the boxes to the right. For evening trips, enter the trip number in the space provided below the grey box.

Field Trip Sign-Up	A.M. 1st/2nd Choice	P.M. 1st/2nd Choice	All Day 1st/2nd Choice
Friday	/	/	/
Saturday	/	/	/
Fri Eve. Choice #1	_____	Fri Eve. Choice #2	_____

Total Enclosed = \$ _____

Club policy requires all field trip participants to comply with the field trip leader's assessment and requests concerning the physical ability of each participant to make or complete the trip. Meeting registration at the door costs \$35.

I release and discharge (and will not make a claim against) Carolina Bird Club for injury, death, or property damage arising from my participation at this meeting and/or Club field trips. This release of liability is entered into on behalf of all members of my family, including all minors accompanying me. I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of any such minors and that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature _____ Date _____ Signature _____ Date _____

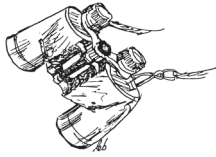
**Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to:
 CBC, 9 Quincy Place, Pinehurst, NC 28374**

Before sending in this form, check the website at www.carolinabirdclub.org to see if any of your trips are full, rescheduled, or cancelled.

Cancellations for the meeting will be refunded if received by Friday, April 15, 2016. Processing of mail-in registrations will not begin until online registration opens. Register online for best availability of field trips.

Cancel by contacting the Headquarters Secretary at hq@carolinabirdclub.org. If you need to cancel after the refund cutoff date, please notify the Headquarters Secretary so we can give your field trip space to someone on the waiting list.

If you registered for the buffet and elect the vegetarian option check here: # persons _____



Carolina Bird Club, Inc.
1809 Lakepark Drive
Raleigh, NC 27612

Periodicals Postage Paid at
 Pinehurst, NC 28374 and
 additional mailing
 offices



Upcoming CBC Meetings

Fall 2016 - Beaufort, SC
 Winter 2017 - Nags Head, NC

CBC Board Members

President, Irvin Pitts, Lexington, SC
 pittsjam@windstream.net

Vice-Presidents

Teri Bergin, Mt. Pleasant, SC
 Ron Clark, Kings Mountain, NC
 Sherry Lane, Wilmington, NC

Secretary

Doris Ratchford, Todd, NC

Treasurer

Samir Gabriel, Huntersville, NC

NC Members-at-Large

Karyl Gabriel, Huntersville
 Mickey Shortt, Linville
 Christine Stoughton-Root, Merritt
 Jeri Smart, Rolesville

SC Members-at-Large

Lewis Burke, Columbia

Immediate Past President Katherine Higgins, Wilmington, NC

Editor of *The Chat*, Don Seriff, Charlotte, NC

Website Editor, Kent Fiala, Hillsborough, NC

Headquarters Secretary, Carol Bowman, Pinehurst, NC

hq@carolinabirdclub.org

Editor of *CBC Newsletter*, Steven Shultz

2404 Bristers Spring Way, Apex, NC 27523

919-608-2069, newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org

Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of December, February, April, June, August, and October.

.....
www.carolinabirdclub.org

The *CBC Newsletter* is published bimonthly by Carolina Bird Club, Inc. Founded in 1937 the membership is open to anyone interested in birds, natural history, and conservation. Current dues are: Individual & non-profit, \$25; Family, \$30; Student, \$15; Patron, \$50 and up; Sustaining & businesses, \$30; Life, \$500; Associate Life (in household with Life Member), \$100 (both Life memberships can be paid in four annual installments). Membership dues of \$25 include \$4 for a subscription to *CBC Newsletter* and \$5 for a subscription to *The Chat*. Cost for CBC bird checklists, including postage: 10@\$5.45, 25@\$13.40, 50@\$27.00, and 100@\$54.00. Submit application for membership, change of address, and payment for checklists to: CBC Headquarters Secretary, 9 Quincy Place, Pinehurst, NC 28374. Copyright © 2016. Printed on 100% recycled paper at Grass Roots Press.