



Carolina Bird Club  
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# CBC Newsletter

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For members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc.,  
Ornithological Society of the Carolinas

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## Winston-Salem to Host Spring Meeting—April 28th-29th

By Karyl Gabriel



North Carolina Birding Trail

Mark your calendars for the spring 2017 Carolina Bird Club meeting on April 28-29 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina! The North Carolina Piedmont is a great place to be for the spring migration. We will explore a variety of piedmont and pre-mountain habitats in and around Winston-Salem, including many on the NC Birding Trail and Pilot Mountain, which is designated as an Important Bird Areas. Full-day outings will even explore parts of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The last meeting in Winston-Salem was held in 2010 when participants tallied 127 species, including over twenty warbler species.

Joan Collins will be our featured speaker on Saturday evening. A passionate birder and ear-birder, Joan is a writer and speaker on ornithology topics for many organizations and

programs, a New York State licensed bird guide and owner of Adirondack Avian Expeditions. She is active in conservation and climate change work with a special love for the Bicknell's Thrush and Gray Jay. Joan is currently president of New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) and editor of NYSOA's newsletter *New York Birders*. Joan also belongs to the Adirondack 46ers, an intrepid group of hikers who have climbed all 46 peaks in the Adirondacks over 4,000 feet. The 46ers are dedicated to environmental protection and educating the public on the proper use of wilderness areas. /Continued P. 2



Featured Speaker Joan Collins

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## Winston-Salem to Host Spring Meeting/Continued

By Karyl Gabriel

Home base for the weekend will be the Hawthorne Inn & Conference Center in the heart of Winston-Salem, with easy on / off access to Business Route 40. The conference center has a 3-Diamond AAA rating, is NC Green Travel Certified and features free parking, business center and fitness center. The Bayberry Bistro on site specializes in American cuisine and serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and room service; guests can also have drink at the bar. The Hawthorne Inn is conveniently located close to interesting downtown dining and cultural attractions for birders and their non-birding companions alike - minutes away from historic Old Salem and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts and within easy driving distance of historic Bethabara, Reynolda House and its Museum of American Art and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA). Old Salem is the first Moravian settlement in the NC Piedmont founded in 1766.



*Hawthorne Inn and Conference Center in the heart of Winston-Salem*



*Historic Old Salem, a nearby attraction for non-birding companions.*

Rooms at the Hawthorne Inn & Conference Center may be booked by calling (800) 972-3774 and asking for a room in the Carolina Bird Club block. Room rates are \$95 per night (excluding NC state tax of 6.75% and occupancy tax of 6%) and include a complimentary hot breakfast. This rate is good until March 4, 2017; please note that reservations made after the March 4, 2017 cut-off date are not guaranteed the CBC rate and are subject to space availability. All the rooms feature a microwave, refrigerator, coffee-maker, free WiFi and hairdryer.

We will have sessions both Friday and Saturday evenings. Saturday evening will feature a buffet dinner at the Hawthorne Inn & Conference Center followed by a program and CBC general meeting. The buffet is priced at \$28 per person.

With beautiful scenery and birds, unique birding experiences, skilled leaders and a pleasant atmosphere, this will be another memorable CBC meeting! You'll find the registration information and trip descriptions in the next Newsletter.

# Big Bend National Park Bonus Trip - May 5 -13

By Ron Clark

The Carolina Bird Club is pleased to offer a trip to central and southwest Texas, including the Edwards Plateau, Davis Mountains State Park and Big Bend National Park.



*Big Bend National Park includes unparalleled mountain, desert, and river environments.*

We'll be looking for many species of western birds and focusing on the few that can only be seen there. May is great as the birds have returned but it isn't seriously hot yet (above 95 degrees).



*Edwards Plateau*

We'll fly into San Antonio on the afternoon/evening of May 5<sup>th</sup>, with White-winged Doves and Great-tailed Grackles at the hotel. On Saturday morning, we'll head west to Texas Hill Country and Kerr Wildlife Management Area.

Our two top priority species here are Golden-cheeked Warbler, easy to see, and Black-capped Vireo, a notorious bush skulker. Central Texas is the only area in the U.S. where these birds are expected. Some others we should see include Black-chinned Hummingbird, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (a recent "split" from Western), Bushtit, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

Next stop is South Llano River State Park for Scissortailed and Vermillion Flycatchers, Green Kingfisher, Scott's Oriole, Canyon Towhee, Black-crested Titmouse, Verdin and Rufous-crowned, Lark and Black-throated Sparrows.



*South Llano River State Park*

We'll check the overpass at I-10 for Cave Swallow. This is the Mexican sub-species, a possible split from the Caribbean and Florida birds. We'll stay in Fort Stockton.

On Sunday, we'll drive to Davis Mountains State Park, where we'll stay for two nights. We'll be in a great area for Montezuma's Quail. On the way, we'll stop at Balmorhea Lake for Clark's Grebe. Aguja Canyon is next, good for Greater Roadrunner (22 seen on the 2015 trip), Verdin, Western Kingbird, Curve-billed and Sage Thrashers, Scaled Quail, Pyrrhuloxia, Bell's Vireo and Varied Bunting.

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## Big Bend National Park Bonus Trip – May 5-13/Continued



*Davis Mountains State Park*

Birds in and around the park include Phainopepla, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Canyon, Rock and Bewick's Wrens, Western Tanager, Cassin's Kingbird, Canyon Towhee and Say's Phoebe. This park is one of the best spots for Montezuma's Quail, which sometimes come into the park host's feeding station. We'll keep an eye to the sky for Golden Eagle, Zone-tailed Hawk, Prairie Falcon and White-throated Swift, and see Elf Owls nesting in poles in the campground.

After we leave for Big Bend on Tuesday, we'll stop in the Christmas Mountains at a feeding station with nesting Lucifer Hummingbirds nearby. Then, it's on to the National Park for three nights in the Chisos Mountains.



*Chisos Mountains*

Along with the aforementioned birds, we can see Gray Hawk, Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, Blue-throated Hummingbird, Bronzed Cowbird, nesting Black Hawk, Scott's Oriole, Hutton's Vireo and Black-chinned Sparrow.

The star of the park is Colima Warbler, and this is the only spot in the U.S where you can expect to find it! A ten-mile roundtrip hike is required, but we'll start early and take all day if we need to.

One of the nights will be spent driving a few of the roads looking for Common Poorwill, which often sit on the pavement waiting for a meal to fly by, as opposed to the typical nightjar feeding method of flying with an open mouth. Big Bend is the darkest National Park in the lower 48. We'll be there at full moon, but we'll nonetheless look forward to some stargazing.

After birding the park on Friday morning, we'll start our way back toward San Antonio, stopping at Seminole Canyon State Park. Along with looking for birds, we'll go on a guided tour of 4000-year-old pictographs. That evening will include a site where we'll watch over a million Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge from a cave for their nightly feeding. It's an amazing spectacle. Along with it, Red-tailed and Harris's Hawks come by for the buffet. On Saturday, we'll go to Lost Maples and Kickapoo Cavern State Parks. Both are also good for Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo, just in case we missed one of them. Kickapoo is also good for Gray Vireo. We'll return to San Antonio for the night and fly home on Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**The price for the trip is \$1,530 each for double occupancy, and \$635 for single supplement. This includes nine nights of lodging, ground transportation, entry fees, bat viewing and guided birded each day. You pay for airfare to San Antonio, any personal spending, two breakfasts, and other meals, except at Big Bend, which includes two lunches and three dinners.**

**The trip is limited to seven participants. A deposit of \$500, due by February 1<sup>st</sup>, will hold your spot, with the balance due by March 1st. If you must cancel, a full refund will be given by March 22nd. Cancellations after March 22nd allow for a refund only if someone is found to take your place. Registration starts on January 22nd.**

**The leader for the trip is Ron Clark. If you are interested or have any questions, contact him at [waxwing@bellsouth.net](mailto:waxwing@bellsouth.net).**

**Ron will send you the registration form and useful info and upon request a species list and photos from the last trip.**

## Snail Kite at Lake Conestee Nature Park: Sometimes it really is a zebra!

By Paul Serridge, Greenville, SC

Photos courtesy of Anthony Q. Martin, Greenville, SC



*Snail Kite photographed by Anthony Q. Martin at Lake Conestee Nature Park.*

A few years ago I was discussing with longtime CBC member, Marion Clark, some instances when relatively common birds were misidentified and reported as rarities. Marion said rather sagely “When you hear hoofbeats in the Carolinas think horse rather than zebra”.

That notion has saved me from some embarrassment on many occasions. Although I must have temporarily forgotten it when I posted a White-cheeked Pintail at Huntington Beach SP, only to issue a retraction a few minutes later when sanity returned.

However, a recent sighting at Lake

Conestee Nature Park (LCNP) in Greenville County, South Carolina, shows that we should not always exclude the possibility of a “zebra”.

On the afternoon of November 30th, a frequent birder at Conestee sent me a text to tell me that there was a Northern Harrier in the West Bay at LCNP. I maintain the LCNP checklist, and a quick consultation showed that there had been only one report of a Northern Harrier at Conestee during a prior month of November. So the bird was rare at this time of year but not unprecedented. This second sighting was rapidly inserted into a new update of the checklist in preparation.

The next day a few GCBC members met at Conestee to try to relocate two recent additions to the LCNP checklist, Marsh Wren and Vesper Sparrow. We made a mental note to be on the lookout for the Northern Harrier, although a violent storm on the evening of November 30th might have caused it to move on.

On our way to the West Bay to look for the Marsh Wren, I received a text from Anthony Martin to tell me that he was on the observation deck looking at “a strange raptor”. Aha! Anthony had found the Northern Harrier. A few moments later a large raptor flew past our group only a few yards away heading along a narrow waterway between the West Bay and the North Slough. Its white rump convinced the three of us who saw it that it was the Northern Harrier reported yesterday.

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## Snail Kite at Lake Conestee Nature Park/Continued

But....we all had reservations about it. It was a strange looking harrier - the white rump was rather scruffy looking, rather than well defined; the tail looked shorter than it should be, but that could have been due to the angle from which we saw it; the tail had an obvious white band at its extremity (Sibley shows a very narrow white band at the end of the tail of a Northern Harrier which none of us had ever noticed before); and it didn't look to be flying like a Northern Harrier. In other words there was plenty to suggest that the bird was NOT a Northern Harrier, but a harrier had been reported yesterday and what other raptor over a marsh in the Upstate of South Carolina has a white rump? We stuck with Northern Harrier.



*Snail Kite photographed by Anthony Q. Martin at Lake Conestee Nature Park.*

When we arrived at the observation deck, Anthony Martin expressed doubts about the bird being a Northern Harrier. He said he would send me photos. I should have asked to see them right there on the deck, but I didn't. I was already convinced that what we had seen was a scruffy Northern Harrier.

My conviction was such that when Anthony sent me his photos later that afternoon I just glanced at them on my phone and said "female Northern Harrier".

Early the next morning, Anthony sent me another text to say that after he posted photos of the harrier on the Greenville County Bird Club Facebook page a birder living in Florida had commented that the photos were of a Snail Kite! I immediately viewed the photos on the larger screen of my laptop. It was embarrassing. It was obviously a Snail Kite and not even close to looking like a Northern Harrier. All the field marks we had attributed to a "strange" Northern Harrier fitted perfectly for Snail Kite.

But there had only ever been one confirmed Snail Kite in South Carolina, at Elliott's Landing Crawfish Ponds in Clarendon County in 2007. Before alerting the birding community (and risking making a fool of myself - again) I sent the photos to Chris Hill, chair of the SC Bird Records Committee. Chris immediately confirmed that it was a Snail Kite. Around the same time photos taken of the same bird on November 30th became available. I sent an email to Carolina Birds to announce only the second Snail Kite in South Carolina and submitted a Rare Bird Report.

In 2007, the Clarendon County Snail Kite stuck around the crawfish farm for more than four weeks. Unfortunately, the Conestee Snail Kite has not been seen again since December 1st, despite many birders searching for it over the next few days.

The Conestee bird had been banded, the bands being easily visible on Anthony's photos which were posted on the CBC Gallery page. Chris Hill sent details of the bands to knowledgeable people and a short time later learned that the bird had been banded just prior to fledging on July 16, 2016, in a private mitigation wetland near Fellsmere, Florida. Snail Kites started nesting in that area in 2015, and it has possibly been the most productive area in the state these past two years.

On this occasion a reported "horse" (Northern Harrier) turned out to be a "zebra" (Snail Kite).

All stories have a moral. The moral of this one is that, while we should still think horse before zebra, ***if the ID marks don't support horse, look very carefully - it could well be a zebra.***

# Birder's Book Review

Steve Shultz

*Britain's Birds: An identification guide to the birds of Britain and Ireland*  
Rob Hume, Robert Still, Andy Swash, Hugh Harrop, and David Tipling  
ISBN 978-0-691-15889-1, 560 pages, Flexibound  
2016, Princeton University Press, \$35.00



North American birders might be considered blessed by the number of field guides we have at our fingertips for use in identifying birds. Or cursed if trying to decide which of the myriad choices to study or take in the field. Our friends on that English-speaking island across the pond historically had fewer choices, and thus a much easier time picking a book. With the introduction of *Britain's Birds: An Identification Guide to the Birds of Britain and Ireland*, that choice just became more interesting.

Ron Hume, Robert Still, Andy Swash, Hugh Harrop, and David Tipling collaborated to create a beautifully presented guide that deserves a spot on any birder's bookshelf. Every species recorded in Britain and Ireland is included; and in addition to serving as an excellent field guide to expected species, the tome provides fascinating commentary on the distribution of North American birds as vagrants to Western Europe. The total number of records for each "unexpected visitor" is listed, allowing birders to gain a better understanding of migration patterns and potential for vagrancy.

Each regularly occurring species rates approximately five photographs carefully selected to show salient fieldmarks and range of plumage. From an artistic standpoint, the overlay of the photos on natural backgrounds makes the guide a joy to simply leaf through on a rainy day when one might rather be in the field. In all, the book features more than 3,200 photographs. Each species account includes the estimated number of birds, or breeding pairs if applicable, found throughout Britain and Ireland, which helps visiting birders understand abundance and range. The treatment of shorebirds may be especially valuable for birders in North America looking for European vagrants or hoping to simply brush up on identification skills. "Family plates" show auks, hawks, shorebirds, owls, larks and more in flight, providing an effective way to learn identification of birds not sitting serenely on the ground. Larophiles will want the book simply for the excellent treatment of gulls.

The guide, while written specifically for Britain and Ireland, also covers species encountered in Iceland, and birders visiting this increasingly popular destination can leverage one guide for all of their far-western European needs.

# Fog. Twenty species of warblers. A chicken.

By Steve Shultz



*Frederica and Linda Kolb*

What do these seemingly incongruent things have in common? They were all headlines during the CBC Blue Ridge Parkway bonus trip held over the weekend of September 17-18. Offered as a chance to encounter roving flocks of Neotropical migrants in the beautiful highlands of northwestern North Carolina, the weekend met those expectations even while veering into uncharted territory.

Ten Club members coalesced into an eager group under low ceilings and spitting mist early on Saturday the 17th. When Sparta, our home base, has low clouds, it usually means the spine of the Blue Ridge on which the Parkway runs will be encased in fog, and such was the case upon our arrival. Nonetheless, we were able to find a few fast-moving flocks of migrants, with Tennessee and Cape May the most commonly encountered warbler. Foggy farm fields produced flocks of Wild Turkey taking advantage of the unsettled conditions in which to extend their breakfasts, and it seemed that the farther north we drove, the thicker the fog.

So we turned around and proceeded in a southerly direction.

This southerly campaign cumulated in an energizing walk up the abandoned road to Mahogany Rock and a chance encounter with what might have been the “flock of the weekend”, a hive of activity that included Golden-winged Warbler among many others. Coming just after the sighting of a Nashville Warbler in the thickets atop the mountain, the walk capped off a decent day of warbler, vireo, tanager, and thrush sightings.

On the way to lunch, we came across a strange sight: a chicken standing alongside the Parkway! Birders are used to scanning for grouse and turkey, but a chicken? A few minutes later, after regrouping at the next overlook, we found that the chicken succeeded in hitching a ride... with one of us! Now named “Frederica” and housed in a handy milk crate, our new mascot rode along for the rest of the trip, never complaining, but enduring a fair number of fried chicken jokes. Frederica now enjoys a new, free-range home in the great state of South Carolina.

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# Welcome New CBC Members!

Ellen Aeschleman  
Oriental, NC

Alan Biggs  
Hilton Head Island, SC

Debra Croft  
Columbia, SC

Dawn & Chip Davis  
Louisburg, NC

Steve Dowlan  
Vilas, NC

Donna Gail Gaudet  
Clayton, GA

Jan Goodson  
Southern Pines, NC

Henry & Elizabeth Link  
Greensboro, NC

Suzanne Taylor  
Pittsboro, NC

## **NEW LIFE MEMBERS**

John & Elaine Hammond  
Durham, NC

## **Fog. Twenty species of warblers. A chicken. /Continued**

**By Steve Shultz**

And while the weather on Saturday challenged, Sunday dawned bright and clear, buoying spirits and whetting appetites for another run at the Parkway. We almost immediately ran into flocks of hungry migrants, with yellow, tan and brown warblers flying about so quickly that we had little choice but to point binoculars at a likely group of leaves and wait for a bird to stop. Tennessee and Cape May again ruled the day, with Canada, Bay-breasted, and others acting in supporting roles.

By noon on Sunday we tallied twenty species of warblers and nice looks at Swainson's Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and more. The trip total came in at 71 species... plus a chicken!





Carolina Bird Club  
www.carolinabirdclub.org

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## Upcoming CBC Meetings

Spring 2017 - Winston Salem, North Carolina

Fall 2017—Litchfield Beach, South Carolina

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pittsjam@windstream.net

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

**[www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://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 © 2017.

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