



Carolina Bird Club
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CBC Newsletter

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Ornithological Society of the Carolinas

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Fall Meeting on the South Carolina Coast

October 1, 2, and 3

by William Burke



Great Blue Heron, Savannah NWR
photo by Deborah Roy

Picturesque Beaufort, SC offers some of the best birding along the Carolina coast. The 2011 Beaufort fall meeting tallied 203 species and our 2016 meeting tallied 191 species. Both are records for the club in the last 20 years. Our field trips will be to some of the most hallowed ground for lowcounty birders. Think of the field trips to Bear Island... Donnelley... Savannah NWR... Botany Bay WMA... Caw Caw... Francis Beidler Forest... Hunting Island State Park... Pinckney NWR..., and the Savannah Spoil Site (Friday only). We also hope to have a field trip to Paris Island for all of you who miss bootcamp. Field trips will be offered on Friday, October 2 and Saturday, October 3.

We will have receptions on Friday and Saturday and because of the pandemic, we have not confirmed our programs for those two evenings. At our banquet on Saturday, Beaufort mayor Billie Keyserling will welcome us and provide a brief introduction to our newest National Park. I expect he will encourage you to visit some of the historical sites that make up The Reconstruction Era National Historical Park. *(continued on page 2)*



Birding During the Pandemic

by Craig Watson, Mac Williams, & William Burke

Birding during the Pandemic: Serenity in the Swamp, by Craig Watson

I am fortunate. I am fortunate that I live in an area that is in short driving distance to excellent birding areas that are not closed to public use. I live East of the Cooper River, on the north side of Charleston County. All of the local places in the Charleston area are closed to recreational activity or access; no trips

to the beach, the islands, local hotspots, etc. I was therefore obliged to think about places where I could bird and practice social distancing, and enjoy the birds and solitude if I was to survive an unknown period of "stay at home". I came to realize that the landscape in which I live has millions of acres of protected and managed lands and which are open to the public and are about an hour's drive or less from where I live. Some of these are Santee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Cape Romain NWR, Francis Marion National Forest, Santee Coastal Reserve and Santee Delta WMAs, and Bear Island and Donnelley WMAs.

I have visited and birded the majority of these areas in the last month, and the common factor in each of these areas is almost the complete lack of other visitors. One of my favorite nearby places is the I'on Swamp area of the Francis Marion National Forest. This area is historically known for the presence of Bachman's Warbler, last reported in the mid 20th Century, with the densest known breeding population of the species historically occurring here in Charleston County in this area. *(continued on page 3)*

In this Issue

- Fall Meeting
- Birding During the Pandemic
- New Members
- Social Distancing & Playback
- How I Became a Birder
- Research Grants

Fall Meeting on the South Carolina Coast *(continued from page 1)*



Holiday Inn, Beaufort
photo courtesy IGH.com

Our headquarters for the meeting is the Holiday Inn Beaufort, 225 Boundary Street. It is a step up over some of our prior motels. The Holiday Inn will host our registration, meetings, and the Saturday night buffet for our banquet. The CBC rates for rooms are (double beds) for the nights of Oct. 1 will be \$159 and \$109 for the other two nights. These rates are due to the heavy demand for U.S. Marine graduations. All rooms and rates include a microwave, fridge, and complimentary Wi-Fi connection. There is a 24-hour notice cancellation policy on individual reservations. Check-in time is 3pm and check-out time is 12 noon. Cut-off date for making reservations under the group block is September 8, 2020. Any reservations made after that date are subject to hotel availability and available rates. Contact the Holiday Inn at 843-379-3100 to make your reservations. Be sure to mention the Carolina Bird Club in order to receive the group rates. The sales manager is Lenny Smith.

Other options for lodging are the Quality Inn at Town Center, or the [Hampton Inn](#), located at [2342 Boundary Street](#). These may be cheaper but neither had room for our meeting because of the graduations.

The executive committee recognizes that the Fall meeting may need to be cancelled but we are hopeful the meeting will happen because it will be safer to travel and be with others. We hope that you and yours continue to stay safe through these challenging times.

Some Facts About Beaufort:

- To say that Beaufort is old in US terms is an understatement. When Port Royal Sound was named, William Shakespeare had not been born nor had the Spanish Armada sailed against England. In 1520, less than thirty years after Columbus discovered America, Captain Francisco Gordillo, exploring from Hispaniola, stopped near Port Royal Sound long enough to name the region Santa Elena, one of the oldest European place names in America.
- After several failed forts by the Spanish and French, the English established the town of Beaufort in 1711.
- Paris Island, home of the marine training facility, is located just outside of Beaufort. There is both a golf course and a Marine Museum located there.
- During the Civil War, the U.S. Navy and Army took Beaufort in 1861 and Reconstruction came to Beaufort while the white plantation owners fled and soon 10,000 former slaves were being educated and inducted into the US Army. It is this remarkable time that has resulted in the establishment of the Reconstruction Era National Historic Park. Shrimping will be in full season at the time of our meeting, so the local seafood should be at its best. A list of restaurants will be available at registration.



Welcome New CBC Members!

Grainne O'Grady
& Warren Weisler
Raleigh, NC

Diane Johnston
Jefferson, NC

Susan Skolochenko
Morganton, NC

Steven Goodman
Asheville, NC

James & Nancy Hackett
Seneca, SC

Cedar Rock Garden
Club
Lenoir, NC

Meredith Boothe
Boone, NC

Caroline Deegan
Geraldine Gannon
Chapel Hill, NC

Lucinda Rondeau
Conway, SC

Kelly Heath
Asheboro, NC

Regina Whittington
Cincinnati, Oh

Patricia Kappmeyer
Hilton Head Island,
SC

John Tjaarda
West Columbia, SC

Theresa Pepin
Knoxville, TN

Virginia Sanchez
Charleston, SC

Jean Askew
Seneca, SC

Chris Mansfield
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Blaise Strenn
Raleigh, NC



Opportunities for Young Birders

Carolina Bird Club offers scholarships for birders 19 and under living in the Carolinas, who are members of the Carolina Young Birders Club.

Scholarships provide assistance in attending bird-related events, such as camps, workshop, training programs or CBC seasonal meetings.



Prothonotary Warbler,
photo by Deborah Roy

Birding During the Pandemic: Serenity in the Swamp (continued), by Craig Watson

That sounds like a long time ago, but I was born about that time, and I know one local birder who is still birding with us, who was fortunate enough to be one of those who observed the Bachman's Warbler locally. While it is doubtful that this bird still exists, there are some who continue to search this area, as I did when I was working there as a biologist with the U.S. Forest Service. For now, I will enjoy the "sweet sweet sweet" of the Prothonotary Warbler, the "churee churee churee" of the Kentucky Warbler, the various zips of the Northern Parula, and watch the graceful glide of the Swallow-tailed Kite as it skims the treetops over the swamp. And, I will listen for that most sought after eastern warbler, named after a Reverend from Charleston and whose dear friend came to paint the species from locally-collected specimens, and whose legacy was the foundation of one of our greatest bird conservation organiza-

tions in the United States, the National Audubon Society. Stay safe and Happy Birding!

Backyard Birding During the Pandemic by Mac Williams

Since the first week in March, my family has been in quarantine. But, since my wife and I grew up in homes that stressed self-reliance, we have ample larders and we really haven't had to go out other than to get perishables and prescriptions.

During the quarantine, I've been making a point to take the time to go and sit and ruminate on the questions of the day while sitting in a lawn chair in my backyard. My house was built in 1962, and the previous owners loved trees. There are 57 mature trees on my half-acre lot, including mature magnolias, Darlington oaks, Laurel Oaks, Sweetgums, azaleas, loblollies, and even one Longleaf Pine. There's also a thick bamboo privacy hedge that fills with Northern Cardinals, Ruby-Crowned Kinglets, White-throated Sparrows, and Brown Thrashers right when twilight ends and darkness sets in. You can hear their chips, chuks, and typewriter sounds (kinglets) as they get ready to roost for the evening. But, before dusk comes and the neighbor-



Ruby-crowned Kinglet,
photo by Deborah Roy

hood Barred Owl starts a-hootin', I enjoy seeing about 30+ different species of birds in my yard every afternoon.



Summer Tanager,
photo by Mary Sonis

As I write this with the windows open, I can hear Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Carolina Wrens, Red-Eyed Vireos, Common Grackles, Brown-Headed Nuthatches, Brown-Headed Cowbirds, Northern Mockingbirds, Downy Woodpeckers, Summer Tanagers, and Great-Crested Flycatchers singing and chipping their hearts out. The other night I heard a lonely Northern Cardinal start singing at 12:30AM--poor fella. Since April 19th (12 days thus far), I've had groups of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks come through every day and give me lengthy looks at them on my feeders. I hadn't seen any in my yard in over five years. There is a quiet solace in birding the same patch through the seasons and years.

And, as you sit and ponder life and how you can't remember what day of the week it is anymore, the little birdies will keep you company as they go about doing their thing. Meanwhile we get to sit and marvel that we are there, that we are alive, and that we get to enjoy such lovely and wholesome beauty in the relative safety of our own backyards.

Birding on the Farm During the Pandemic, by William Burke

I feel guilty about my birding because I am so lucky and privileged. I live on a 40-acre farm with timber land on three sides and an abandoned farm across the road. I have never had the chance or taken the opportunity to bird it every day and now have the opportunity. I have had



Swainson's Warbler,
photo by Irvin Pitts

63 species in April including 11 warblers and 4 vireos. I counted 5 Ovenbirds today. I hear a Hooded Warbler virtually every day but have yet to see one. The Swainson's and Kentucky Warblers have been more cooperative. I am awakened most days by Whippoorwills and am serenaded by Wood Thrushes every day. After the whips my next bird is often a Phoebe followed by a Yellow-throated Warbler. Green Herons and Wood Ducks visit the pond in front of the house every day and I can close the day by having a beer on the front porch and being visited by hummingbirds. Today an Orchard Oriole serenaded me. When I am not birding I have been building a coop for our 6 new chicks.



Kentucky Warbler,
photo by Mary Sonis

On Social Distancing for Birders and Birds: The Proper use of Playback, Share the Love-Share the Shore, and A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

by Craig Watson

We are all affected by the Social Distancing recommended by our local municipalities, states, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Some are more affected than others. Yet for all of us, I hope that you are able to get out and safely bird while following the requirements and recommendations of the CDC and local authorities. As this pandemic became more prevalent some joked that social distancing was not hard for us birders, since as introverts, we've been practicing that most of our lives. That is true for some, but not all birders are introverts.

All joking aside, following social distancing guidelines is a serious matter and there are relevant principles that apply to us as birders and how we behave out in the field practicing Social Distancing with other birders and even the birds themselves.

There are three areas that I would like to briefly present where the birding community can most likely make improvements. These recommendations can and will make things better for our birding community and for the health and survival of the birds that we are observing and studying. These are:

- 1) The proper use of playback
- 2) protecting waterbirds and shorebirds
- 3) the ethics of "capturing the moment" by getting that great photo!

The Proper Use of Playback – This topic gets a lot of varied discussion in birding circles, from those who totally oppose its use and those who use it to "extremes." I personally have observed professionals use a screech owl and chickadee playback session played loudly for up to 15 minutes to attract birds! To me that is very disruptive, far beyond what is acceptable. Playback can be used by professionals to gather scientific evidence, such as for surveys for Black Rail, yet professionals are concerned about their own use of such protocols. For us, we want to simply use playback to get a view of a bird or draw birds more out into the open for viewing.

The Carolina Bird Club officially recommends that you follow one primary source for the use of playback, the ABA Code of Ethics (<https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>). Section 1b applies to our use of playback and says this:

"(b) Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger. Be particularly cautious around active nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display sites, and feeding sites. Limit the use of recordings and other audio methods of attracting birds, particularly in heavily birded areas, for species that are rare in the area, and for species that are threatened or endangered. Always exercise caution and restraint when photographing, recording, or otherwise approaching birds."



USFWS Conducting Black Rail Survey,
Photo by Craig Watson

The primary idea is to not disturb the birds, particularly during the nesting season. Birds use sound for a variety of reasons and during breeding season it can be to attract a mate, defend territories, or assemble the family unit. No one really knows how playback affects these behaviors, except that it surely disrupts their normal routines. Imagine someone outside of your home calling out to you unnecessarily, disturbing your family, and calling out to your mate, and then imagine it day after day throughout the season. You'll probably poke your head out of the door and bam, you've been seen! Moreover, you are most likely highly annoyed! Outside of breeding season the impacts may be less-- no one knows-- but it perhaps does not disrupt the birds as it does during the breeding cycle.

Another great source for the use of playback is David Sibley's guide and recommendations to the proper use of playback (<https://www.sibleyguides.com/2011/04/the-proper-use-of-playback-in-birding/>), and to quote Mr. Sibley, "There is no debate that playback (playing a recording of a bird's song) is one of the most powerful tools in a birder's struggle to see birds in the wild."

(continued on page 5)



National Audubon Society



Excessive playback by birders,
Photo courtesy of Sumit Sen, Birds of India

On Social Distancing for Birders and Birds *(continued from page 4)*

Even he recognizes that the level of disturbance to birds is not well known. In his treatment of playback, Mr. Sibley provides both the arguments for and against the use of playback, and I encourage you to read the full article. Perhaps the most important section to read is titled “What Not to Do!” The idea presented here is not to use playback for long periods and at high volumes. The two following sections, “Respect the Birds,” and “Respect the Birders” are also filled with good tidbits of information on the use of playback. Basically, keep your social distance and minimize the interaction.

A limited number of studies have shown that use of playback may disturb individuals, but perhaps does not influence populations. However, recall the mention of Black Rail previously, and where there are already suppressed populations of individuals. Extreme care must be used when using recordings around threatened or endangered species, as the consequences to individuals can impact such a population. And remember, it is illegal in some places and parks, so be sure to research local rules and regulations for any parks or managed facilities before you use playback.

There are many different situations in which you will find yourself birding and where you will have to decide about the use of playback, disturbance, respecting the birds, and respecting other birders. Keep your social distance, and use the ABA Code of Ethics and David Sibley’s advice when tempted to use playback, and, to reiterate it: keep your social distance!

Although not playback, the use of laser pointers can also be highly disturbing to birds. In fact, lasers are often used to control problem birds under certain conditions. Birds can see the beam! Be careful and if you must use this, use the beam to direct attention to a landmark you can use to direct others to the bird. Do not point the laser directly at the bird or onto the bird!

Share the Love, Share the Shore! – During certain times of the year, particularly during breeding season and both migration periods, shorebirds and waterbirds congregate in nesting colonies or stage in large flocks for breeding. In many cases they choose those places we all love to visit, the beaches and inlets of our fabulous coasts. As birders, beachgoers, conservationists, and citizen scientists, we must recognize the vulnerable state that many of our coastal birds are in. Impacts from humans are increasing, particularly sea level rise encroaching upon nesting and roosting habitat, and we cannot discount the disturbance from increased foot traffic and off-leash animals. I bird the islands and the beaches of South Carolina as often as I can, and I have witnessed huge disturbance events during those times. However, on one recent trip to an inlet near here, I observed thousands of birds roosting at high tide because no one was allowed on the beach, no humans, no off-leash animals, as a result of the beaches being closed during the pandemic, and it only took a week for birds to acclimate to the lack of humans on the beach. Birds respond positively to reduced disturbance, and it is important to protect and manage crucial loafing, foraging, and roosting areas for these birds. This is a great example of how forced social distancing on humans has at least temporarily benefitted resident and migrating shorebirds and waterbirds. These birds have in some sense always practiced social distancing for their survival, yet they are far too often disturbed by people getting too close. How close is too close? If the birds begin to wing flap, walk quickly, and flush, you are far too close! These birds need their energy to breed and migrate, and each time they are flushed they unnecessarily expend energy that must be replenished quickly to carry out these high-energy activities. Audubon New York has a campaign to educate us all on how to protect these vulnerable birds at our coastlines (<https://ny.audubon.org/conservation/share-love-sharetheshore>). Within this article you’ll find links to behaviors you can follow to reduce disturbance, how you can help protect these species, and what you can do to educate other users about our vulnerable coastlines. Shorebird populations have plunged over the past few decades, and waterbird populations are declining at rapid rates. Do your part and let the birds “shelter in place,” and let ‘em rest and let ‘em nest. If you are interested in volunteering to help these birds, please visit Audubon North Carolina (<https://nc.audubon.org/ways-help/volunteer>) or Audubon South Carolina (<https://sc.audubon.org/conservation/shorebird-stewards>).



**Child flushing
Black Skimmers,
gulls, and terns.
Photo courtesy
of Florida Fish
& Wildlife
Conservation
Commission
(FWC)**



**Flock of
undisturbed
Red Knots in
South Carolina,
photo by Nolan
Schillerstrom,
Icarus Imagery**

On Social Distancing for Birders and Birds (continued from page 5)

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words – Actually derived from “One Look is Worth a Thousand Words,” photos of birds capture our imagination and many of us live vicariously through the work of excellent photographers. As I was researching information from this piece, I came across a famous quote, “If your pictures aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough.” Wow! Then I found this one - “Only photograph what you love.” Birds are certainly the subject of our love but getting too close can be very disturbing. I’m sure the first quote wasn’t regarding birds, yet we as birders and photographers, both amateurs and professionals, must be aware of our actions and how we affect birds, and keep a good social distance. I am often reminded when I am out birding, while trying to capture the moment, of events where getting “that photo” showed significant disrespect for nearby birders and the bird they were attempting to photograph. One case was a few years ago where an oddly plumaged passerine bird was so continually harassed with playback that the bird eventually left the area and was not seen again, and this all occurred during the breeding season! And, most recently on a trip to Minnesota, guidelines for viewing a rare owl were distributed for photographers and birders not to block the road or get too close to the owl in question. Well, you know the rest of the story.

We as birders, and photographers, must do all we can to communicate to our fellow birders and photographers that this kind of behavior is not acceptable. We must distance ourselves and not disturb the bird. Birder photographers have a wide assortment of photographic equipment to use, and I have a simple point and shoot camera that zooms out to 260x; I social distance myself from the bird, reaching out with the lens to ‘capture that moment.” Much of this behavior is addressed in my first section of this article, the part about playback, yet some will go to extraordinary lengths to get the photo. I’ll accept a poor-quality photo any day to document a rarity rather than disturb it by getting too close. Again, there are many situations you will find yourself in when you want to photograph a bird, and you will have to decide quickly what to do in most cases. If you can put into practice what the ABA Code of Ethics suggests, and bear in mind the issues with playback, you can develop your birding and stalking skills. If you exercise these social distancing rules, you’ll be a better birder/photographer:

- Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas.
- Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites.
- Try to use a blind or hide and take advantage of natural cover.
- Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.
- Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist.



Left, birders give space to owl and open lane on road;
Right, one person getting too close, blocking road;
Bottom left, birders blocking road and getting too close to owl.
All photos by Craig Watson



In these modern times, bird populations have drastically declined. It is estimated that we have lost 3 billion birds, permanently, in North America over the last 50 years. As our human population continues to grow, the impacts will be even greater. We must do all we can now to protect what we have. We all have a connection with birds and to continue enjoying this connection, we must practice social distancing at all times, not just during our pandemic.

Let ‘em rest, let ‘em nest!

Two Wonderful “How I Got Into Birding” Stories from Our Members at Large

By Les Coble, CBC Eastern NC Representative at Large



Les Coble

Birding can be done anytime, anywhere, and during oh so many activities. I can also just listen while working around the farm, horseback riding, biking and fishing on the local rivers and bays. After all, birds are everywhere. Birds add dimension to trips locally, nationally and around the world. My goal recently is to concentrate on bird activity and behavior, their interaction with each other and their environment. After all, this is how my birding started.

My first memory of the drama in bird life was during my first-year hunting. I was too young to be permitted to carry a rifle, but I was fascinated in the up-close encounters with wildlife through a pair of binoculars. I remember sitting on a central Pennsylvania ridge in November a Great Horned Owl was being harassed by a murder of American Crow. After flying up the slope from tree to tree it finally settled on a large limb and hopped to the trunk. There it turned and placed its back against the trunk. As the dozen crows came closer, more vocal with short and sharp, high pitched caws, the Owl began lifting a feathered leg and extending it outward. That clearly warned the crows how close they could safely come. After 20 minutes, during which I would never have been able to hear a deer, the crows moved on from this no-win encounter. I saw this twice during the

few years I hunted.

But I had never birded with a group. My family kept strictly to itself and my birding was limited to those hunting expeditions. While hunting, Whip Poor Wills often landed next to me, their wing flicking near another Will certainly kept me from looking for my quarry. Winter Wrens teased my patience to not smile too broadly as they walked over my boots and pant legs, and Red-tailed Hawks took rabbits while I sat as still as possible in the cold for yet another hour. Ruffed Grouse danced on downed logs after drumming.

While in college in MD my wife elected to take a 2-credit course in Ornithology, basically a field class in bird watching. The final exam included a practical on a minimum of 30 birds out of fifty required songs to be known. She spent hours of studying for the exam, and we spent hours listening to bird songs instead of The Moody Blues. In late spring, summer and fall I was a seasonal ranger at nearby Shad Landing State Park, learning the birds as I led wildflower walks. There I saw my first Black-throated Blue Warblers, I presumed a pair, as they danced around a shrub a few feet off my trail. The ID pattern seemed out of place. The shimmering blue on the back, a dark facial mask, and a dark throat contrasting with snow white breast and belly caught my imagination. I would call this the “spark bird”, especially for an interest in warblers as my most sought after birds. Maryland took all new Naturalists on a statewide trip of the Parks in western MD. I saw my first Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, and Chestnut-sided Warbler in the Appalachians. In central MD my first Cerulean Warblers were seen, but under an upsetting scenario. One male and two females were feeding a Brown-headed Cowbird. I was disturbed two females would not be adding to the population that year.

We moved to my wife’s hometown on Maryland’s Eastern Shore where I was invited to participate in a bird walk. I knew many of the birds and was asked how many were on my life list. Life List? What’s that? I returned home to open the Golden Guide my wife used in class and counted a whopping 290 species. My interest was further peaked as the founder of the club had talked of his 100th bird, 200th bird, and so on. What would be my 300th? It was spring migration on the Shore. At that time a 3-hour walk could yield 22 species of warblers! Within 2 weeks a Hooded Warbler ticked #300 and now I can’t wait to see it every year (they nest here in Eastern NC on my farm).

Then I got to bird with Chandler Robbins, one of the Golden Guides authors, whose passion for birds and conservation was virulently contagious. I caught his enthusiasm. He always pressed me for details in sightings and I learned quickly. One day I could not answer an ID question when I stated I had seen a Long-billed Dowitcher. He asked in a skeptical tone, “How many tail feathers did it have?” Then, after my quizzed look, he proceeded to crease a smile with an, “I got ya moment.”

My other mentor was a history teacher who had started a bird club in the local high school and mentored dozens of future professionals. Many of those students still lead walks in the local club. In his retirement he started a Tour Company. I went on several trips to gain the experience and knowledge he desired for leading the groups. Trips to Arizona, Florida, Texas, Maine, and Canada’s Maritimes had me see the Razorbill as life bird #400 and Purple-crowned Hummingbird as #500.

As a sidebar life bird #600 is unknown as the AOU had a major split fest one year. I have that as an unknown armchair lifer. #700 came at 10:00 PM near Nome, Alaska as my birding partner on the trip took upon himself that last evening to push till, I could achieve that goal. A Pacific Golden Plover hopped atop a tundra tussock while sharply calling to attract a mate or warn me I was far, far too close. But that was less spectacular than the pair of Gyrfalcons at 11 PM that same night who were mutually hunting a side slope. One Gyr waited upslope till the other drifted further down slope to scatter prey, with the up slope Gyr the ambush killer. This alternating pattern continued till a scurrying rabbit succumbed. I remember when someone seeing 700 birds was a rarity worthy of a big celebration party. *(continued on page 8)*

How I Got Into Birding (continued from page 7)

It still is, but thanks to the great Cornell eBird team this is now easily within reach of birders, as is 750 in my opinion. My jinx bird? The only N.A. warbler I have never seen – a Hermit Warbler, as much as anything because I have only birded California at San Diego, and never in Oregon.

After teaching at a local college and seeing many students join bird clubs, I took my path of study to the task of learning the meaning behind those scientific names. New field ID clues came to my birding. Birding history also comes to life through birds named after many early naturalists. Birding now for 59 years I guess I will forever see Myrtle Warblers but had to lose Oldsquaw after years of scolding from female birders, albeit most proper. Many ancient and mythological characters have shaped our bird's names and are a tremendous set of stories for bird presentations. I asked college students to use the acronym of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) as their mnemonic for the study and grasping of visual clues when birding. SPCA I explained was the manner in which to learn and observe birds: Shape, Pattern, finally Color and then Anything Else, or All that Gizz. Today the "Anything Else" has become an increasingly major factor in field clues as guidebooks and periodicals are more frequently printing valuable observations that distinguish many birds.

Bird behavior has much to tell us. Jon Young's book *What the Robin Knows* is a grand start for many birders. I now bird primarily to observe the "anything else" and return to my roots of wildlife observer. If you have ever watched Semipalmated Sandpipers on the breeding territory you will always think "Lover and Actor Extraordinaire" of this bird that is so drab in spring and fall on the mid-Atlantic. For further study I want to know why in mid-December in Eastern NC, the two Blue-headed Vireos I watched were so agitated and then aggressive to the three Yellow-rumped Warblers? Both used vocal with sounds I had never heard. How many Bald Eagles does it take to get an Osprey to relinquish its catch? One? Two? The Osprey gave up at the third which was on its it's back beneath the Osprey, at that point no more than 5 feet from the water surface. The adult eagle caught the fish in midair and as quickly and expertly right itself to accelerate with deep wing beats toward shore, and with his immature challengers in tow. It is safe to assume the youngsters learned a lesson.

My life list has always been dictated by bird observation goals. I got to 700 life birds simply seeking field experiences with birds. Chasing rarities has always been down the priority list. I have many successful rarity chasing experiences but do not seek these opportunities. I picked out an Ivory Gull life bird in Delaware on one such trip simply because the flight pattern was out of place within the large mixed flock.

By Karyl Gabriel, CBC Western NC Representative at Large



Karyl Gabriel
with a Florida Scrub Jay



Karyl and her husband Samir
on Whiteface Mountain, Adirondack Mts, New York after
Bicknell's Thrush

I grew up a military "brat," moving every couple of years to my father's next assignment. In the face of ever changing schools, houses and towns, my family kept a sense of normalcy by holding on to the things that stayed the same – family bonds, love of seeing new places and learning about new people, and an innate love of nature that my parents actively encouraged. Wherever we lived, we spent most weekends taking drives, hiking, and exploring.

Early in my childhood, we lived in rural Central Texas where our yard backed up to a riparian creek area and vast grazing lands of a neighboring ranch. That backyard was rich in wildlife, wildflowers, field mice, "horned toads," lizards, snakes, crawdads, opossums, raccoons, skunks, spiders, scorpions, butterflies, and birds. It was there that I was first hooked, watching Northern Cardinals at our feeder and a Loggerhead Shrike clean out a nest of mice, and listening to the Scissor-tailed Flycatchers scold each other from powerline perches and Northern Mockingbirds sing all night. But I was still just a bird watcher, enjoying watching the beauty of birds and their activities, and also interested in catching spiders and scorpions to take for school show-and-tell. Later, when my family moved to Maryland, fate saw to it that my mother's best friend was a birder, who intentionally set about looking for birds and identifying them. (continued on page 9)



Karyl & her husband Samir,
birding in West Virginia



Black-throated Blue Warbler
she took on Warbler Road in
Virginia



Loggerhead Shrike



Karyl birding

Want to share your own "How I Got Into Birding" story?
Please send your completed story to newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org.

How I Got Into Birding (continued from page 8)



Karyl birding in Iceland



Northern Cardinal,
photo by Karyl

Later, when my family moved to Maryland, fate saw to it that my mother's best friend was a birder, who intentionally set about looking for birds and identifying them. I started going with Rena to the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge that bordered the military base. I learned about migration and warblers. Then I saw a Black-throated Blue Warbler. This was the bird that transformed me from bird watcher to birder. I am grateful to Rena for opening the way to what has become a lifelong passion.



White-throated Sparrow,
photo by Karyl



Karyl birding in Sax Zim Bog with
a broken foot!

From then on, I looked for birds wherever I was. On a return assignment to Texas when I was in high school, it was a thrill to identify for myself a wintering Harris Sparrow and a Painted Bunting pair nesting near our house in spring. Though I took many years off

from actively birding to pursue a career and family, my binoculars were always nearby.

About 10 years ago, I discovered and joined the Carolina Bird Club. The CBC reminded me how much I missed birding. What a delight to find this group of like-minded, interesting people and get back to more actively birding again, honing my skills and building my knowledge!

Carolina Bird Club Research Grants Delayed Due to Covid-19 Pandemic

by Craig Watson

Grants awarded by the Carolina Bird Club (CBC) to three separate research grants totaling over \$17,000 will not be implemented during calendar year 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

These projects are:

- 1) **Importance of Seabrook and Kiawah Islands for Red Knot:** Estimating population size, stopover duration, and habitat use - \$1,680 for travel expenses. This is a part of a graduate student project at The University of South Carolina in partnership with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR).
- 2) **Investigating and Protecting Critical Nocturnal Roosts: Whimbrel at Deveaux Bank, South Carolina** - \$7500 for the purchase of 5 GPS tags @ \$1500/ea. This project was to be a cooperative project between the SCDNR and The University of South Carolina with a graduate student coordinating the work and the university receiving the funds.
- 3) **American Oystercatcher tracking: Modeling the influence of foraging distance on nest and brood survival and development of a tool to forecast future nesting distributions in response to climate variation, North Carolina** - \$8,250 for purchase of GPS trackers, harness equipment, and travel costs. This project supports a Ph.D. project out of the University of Oklahoma and is in partnership with Audubon North Carolina.

Work on these three shorebird species in both Carolinas have been deemed high priority by the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative (<https://atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/>). Due to the core research for these projects being conducted within the university system, all field work and research has been cancelled this season by the universities due to the pandemic. Each of the projects will be able to be completed next season by the students and conservation partners.

CBC Research, educational and conservation grants are available through the Carolina Bird Club.

For additional information visit www.carolinabirdclub.org.



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Spring - Black Mountain, NC - May 6 - 9, 2021

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

www.carolinabirdclub.org

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Membership dues include access to publications: the *CBC Newsletter* and *The Chat*, which is only available on line. Tax deductible as allowable by law.

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